

# Home in the Sandhills

Selected Prose by  
John Charles McNeill

*Home in the Sandhills*

Also by John Charles McNeill

*Lyrics from Cotton Land*  
*Songs, Merry and Sad*  
*Possums and Persimmons*  
*The Pocket John Charles McNeill*

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Selected Prose

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John Charles McNeill

St. Andrews College Press  
Laurinburg, North Carolina

1997

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## Preface

John Charles McNeill is best known for his poetry, collected in the books *Songs Merry and Sad*, *Lyrics From Cotton Land*, *Possums and Persimmons*, edited by Richard Walser, and most recently, *The Pocket John Charles McNeill*, edited by Grace Evelyn Gibson and published by the Scottish Heritage Series of St. Andrews Press. While this emphasis on his poetry is understandable, this present volume, dealing with his prose, provides a balance for his total literary output. Most of this was written while he was a columnist-at-large for the *Charlotte Observer* during his three years there (1904-1907), when his literary powers were most mature. This preface presents a brief biography of McNeill (which owes much to the volume *John Charles McNeill, North Carolina Poet, 1874 to 1907, A Biographical Sketch*, by Agatha Boyd Adams), which puts in perspective and indicates chronologically where these writings were composed and published.

McNeill was born in Scotland County in 1874 into a family that put a high premium on learning. His father, Duncan McNeill, was, among other things, a newspaper editor, and was valedictorian of his class at Trinity College (which ultimately evolved into Duke University) while it was still in Richmond County. McNeill had a happy childhood as the youngest of several children, and, in addition to making good use of his father's ample library, which included works by Scott, Thackery, Burns, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and others, spent many happy hours exploring the countryside where he lived. What he saw and learned in his enjoyment of his natural surroundings appears in many places in his later literary work. He has been described by everyone who knew him as being sweet-spirited, attractive, and intelligent as a boy, and those judgments did not change throughout his brief life.

He enrolled at Wake Forest College in 1894 and obtained a B.A., *summa cum laude*, and then an M.A., with high scholarly distinction even though he was never observed to study to the point of drudgery. He was influenced during his time at college by

Dr. Benjamin Sledd, who was Head of the English Department, and who clearly recognized McNeill's potential as a writer.

Following his days as a student at Wake Forest, he served briefly as a professor at Mercer College in Georgia, and then returned to North Carolina where he opened a law practice in 1900 in Lumberton, North Carolina, having passed the law bar exam in 1897. While in Lumberton, he owned for awhile an interest in a newspaper, *The Argus*, to which he contributed an editorial from time to time. He also served a term in the North Carolina Legislature.

His interest in law, however, was never profound, and his practice suffered from his frequent absences from his office to go fishing when the weather was appropriate.

By this time he had published a number of poems, in *Century* magazine among others, and he accepted, in 1904, an offer to serve on the staff of the *Charlotte Observer*, in which his contract required only that he write "whenever and whatever he pleases" for a column in that newspaper. The years that he served there were the most fruitful of his literary life, as he developed quickly under the stimulus of a guaranteed audience combined with an absence of deadline pressures. Two people who, in recognizing his potential as a writer, made this opportunity possible were H. E. C. "Red buck" Bryant, and the *Observer* editor, J. P. Caldwell.

While on the *Charlotte Observer* staff, McNeill had an opportunity to write in many different genres. While many columns contained poems on which his reputation has stood, there were short essays, brief sketches dealing with nature and other items that interested McNeill, short stories, book and magazine reviews, and reports on special events. McNeill also served as a drama critic for the paper. He frequently represented the *Observer* as a reporter at intellectual and literary presentations. In fact, Dr. W. L. Poteat, the President of Wake Forest at the time, after reading McNeill's summary of a speech he made in Charlotte, wrote him that he considered the newspaper account better than the speech itself.

A climax to McNeill's growing stature as a literary figure came when he was selected as the first recipient of the Patterson Cup, for which he is cited as the North Carolinian who "published during the preceding twelve months work showing the greatest excellence and highest literary skill and genius." The cup was presented by President Theodore Roosevelt, who was passing through the state at the time.

For those familiar with McNeill's work, the poetry looms particularly large relative to his prose owing to repeated editions of his poetry books referred to earlier. All this has tended to make his readers regard him simply as a poet of stature, while there is a general lack of knowledge of his prose writings, most of which appeared in the *Charlotte Observer*. This volume rectifies in an excellent fashion our perception of McNeill as a literary figure by bringing to light the high quality of his prose.

He left the *Observer* to return to his home in Scotland County in 1907, where he died of an undetermined illness on October 17 at age 33.

He has been remembered as a particularly striking and pleasant person, with friends representing all walks in life, and as a sensitive poet with a fine ear for dialect and splendid talent for choosing the right words to express poetically his interests and loves. This book will provide another dimension to our view of McNeill, and will make all the more poignant the memory of his untimely death.

—Jasper D. Memory

*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*



## John Charles McNeill's Work on *The Charlotte Observer*

John Charles McNeill was an adornment to *The Charlotte Observer* in the days when it was North Carolina's leading voice of business, industry and the building of a New South.

Publisher Daniel A. Tompkins and Editor Joseph P. Caldwell had bought the paper in 1892 and poured in the resources to make it an outstanding daily. They hired the best talent they could find and built its circulation from 1,100 to almost 10,000—the largest in the state.

When Isaac Erwin Avery, the paper's city editor and local columnist, said to be the best newspaper writer in the state, died in March, 1904, Editor Caldwell sent star reporter H.E.C. "Red Buck" Bryant to Laurinburg with instructions to seek out McNeill and make him an offer he couldn't refuse.

Bryant found the tall, bony, boyishly handsome McNeill, slumped in a barren second floor law office, his back to his desk and his long legs braced halfway up a wall, reading from a book in his lap.

He tapped McNeill on the shoulder and asked, "How's the law business?"

McNeill responded, "The law business is all right, but I've got no clients."

Bryant said Joseph Caldwell wanted to pay McNeill for writing poetry and anything else he cared to compose. He would have neither a desk nor a deadline. McNeill decided that was better than practicing law.

His poems, many of them in dialect, began appearing in *The Observer* under a standing headline, "Lyrics from Cotton Land." Elsewhere in the paper appeared McNeill's feature stories about any subject that struck his fancy. He might go out to cover a fire and return with a human-interest story about something completely different. He was also the paper's drama and literary critic and its best speech reporter.

He combined a poet's ear with a reporter's eye, and his writings caught the rhythm of Southern speech, the mystery of the wild woods, and the sound of summer nights.

When he died in October, 1907, he was only 33. Tributes to his memory poured in from readers across the Carolinas. *The Observer* mourned, calling McNeill "the greatest genius our state has yet produced. . . There is no guessing what he might have produced."

A bust of him stands at the entrance to the Carolina Room in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

—Jack Claiborne

*The University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

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I

## The Sandhills



## Lumbee

(*Lumber River*)

Writing about the Lumber River, to a man who has spent his summers in dalliance with her, is like writing about his sweetheart. She is as coquettish, as subject to change, as teasing as any girl that goes; and no human angel ever possessed more variable hues and tints and shadows in her misty eyes than this unconscious flirt, where the reflection of flags and reeds and rushes ripple below her banks and the yellow of the gravel-bottom in shallow places darkens gradually to the black depths.

She is a tortuous, delicious flirt, but she does not deserve the punishment put upon her by geographers, who have perverted her sweet Indian name of "Lumbee" into something that suggests choking sawdust, rotting slabs, and the shrill scream of the circular saw. Though she be now wedded to civilization, she should not have been robbed of her maiden name.

But her playmates know that she is as reckless of her name as the rose is. She is just as wild, wandering about in her solemn swamp, as she was when the Indians dubbed her "Lumbee." Her old neighbors, except the Indian, have never deserted her: the 'coon, the 'possum, the wildcat—Lumbertonians will recall the writer's interest in wildcats—the mink, otter, turkey, wood-duck, heron—locally known as the "hyern"—and the fly-up-the-creek, or kingfisher. And they will never desert her, for there is no way to eject them from their swampy realm. They know how to take care of themselves. The naturalists, grieving over the nearing extinction of the wood-duck, say, "Oh, he is such a gentle, unsuspecting bird that he is at the mercy of the sportsman."

That was some other wood-duck, not the sly fellow in nabob costume that steals about the current and among the tussocks of the Lumber, or whips along out of gun-reach overhead. He is everything that is suspecting and watchful. I have lain at baited places half a day for him to come, not batting an eye or crooking a finger, let the yellow-flies do their worst. At last I would see him



gliding like a shadow among the big boles of gum and cypress; he would make no outcry, he would not take the air for it, but silently as he came he slid away and gave me a chance to crush a mosquito. Who has not rowed cautiously down stream of a foggy morning, thinking to creep up on him among the water-grasses, only to hear his startled scream and the whistle of his retreating wings around the bend?

But these stragglers about her trail are not her familiars: her own brood are the bass (known locally as trout or chub), the pickerel, the red-bell, the sun-perch, and the blazed-faced, burly topminnow. These are of her household. The cat, which inhabits all waters and moves like his enemy, the Negro, by night, deserves no celebration here.

The bass of late years seem to be on the increase in proportion as the pickerel decrease. The redbelly is good to eat, but he is rather poor game. He thinks too much of his hide. You must set your hooks for him, and go way back out of sight and sit on a log until you see your pole tugging. But the bass and the pickerel are not such precious cowards. They will not give a good sucker-bait the go-by if the shadow of a man *is* on the pool. When the troll whirs across the surface, flashing up the drops from its shining wings, all they think about is which will be the first to arrive.

But the denizens of the swamp and stream are not all the charms which this sweetheart stream has to offer. Her swimming is a delight and a panacea; her boating amid her bird-haunted solitudes can not be equalled elsewhere; there is undying romance in the long clamped rafts that float past from "up ahead" on their way "down below"; squads of boys have worked for months to clear out a "cut-off," obstructed with mountains of debris—worked with the utmost gusto in order at last to see the remainder of the pile yield to the water's shoulder and the stampede to the open stream below. In summer all the thrushes seem to seek this cathedral swamp. The air is permeated with the scent of ironwood blossoms, and bay and water-honeysuckle; and musical with the "busy bliss" of bees. There is never a time when wonders do not wait in her brakes and copses: some furred animal not seen before, some secluded colony of snakes, some wren nest built securely above

an eddy, some strange new flower worth taking home to the girls. Lumber River is a second mother, a lesser love to all the dwellers on her countryside; and, whatever the prose of after life, the boy who has spent some idle years with her should never regret his log; and, whatever happiness awaits him, it can not eclipse her in his memory nor divorce her from his heart.

Come summer, I'll throw myself on her breast again and feel her cool, soft arms around me.

## A Unique Settlement—Riverton

There is really no Riverton, as places go nowadays in the world's mind. What was Riverton is no longer a post office, but just Maxton, R. F. D. No. 4. Some citizens fret over this loss of identity more than they rejoice at the increased convenience of their mails. "We don't want to be thought of as living in Robeson," they complain. "So far as we are known at all, pray let us be hailed as from our proper place."

They forget what a mere handful of letters the Riverton part of R. F. D. No. 4 gets and sends; forget that, if Riverton depended on the mail for her fame, she would have to present her card when she traveled farther than Maxton. She would be even as her sisters. She would be even as Queensdale or Foxden—just a wide sand-bed.

But Riverton is known on her merits. She is ten miles up the western bank of the Lumber river from Maxton and ten miles north from Laurinburg. Of the mail route she occupies about two miles. Her houses are exactly thirteen and all her people, except one family, are kinfolk. Though farmers and frugal livers, they are generally college-bred, and, being Scotch, they cleave together. Instead of scalding one another's dogs, they reciprocally borrow meat and medicines—the test of peace and friendship.

Now, this is a fact about the Lumbee river (sadly anglicized by geographers into Lumber river) that along the whole of its shady length it is nowhere loved so much as here. If it should shift its course to a distance or run dry, the land here, now all but priceless, would sell for a song. Hardly a wintry Sunday afternoon but some of the people stroll over and stand on its bluffs or sit by it, merely for the joy of seeing it; and every day in summer it is the Mecca of young and old. Not for nothing are the walls of porches hung with bait-gourds and canes; nor is it insignificant that so many footpaths leave the road toward the east. Boys and girls at boarding schools are homesick for the stream; they inquire about it in their letters. The daily question at home is, "Do you reckon it's warm enough

yet?" Even this: the local belief is that the water is as that of Siloam, a panacea. There are many cases where men pronounced incurable by physicians, come home to die, but having employed what strength was left them at swimming, can now jump a ten-rail fence and chase a fox all night.

Albeit, the fun here is not expensive. Nobody is on the ground for monetary gain. The boys make their own canoes and the girls their own and their brother's bathing suits.

Now we are down to the story. A few years ago a young man mentioned bathing suits, with the idea of male and female persons going swimming together, and the latter all fell down and fainted at the immodest thought.

"But don't you pay your \$3 fare to Wrightsville, your big board-bill at the Seashore Hotel, your frequent quarter for the use of a dirty, wet, scantling-floored dressing cell, and leave the rest of your change in Wilmington for lunches and gee-gaws all to promenade the beach and stand in the uncertain depth of the surf, conscious that the feel of the water is not half so fine as ours, and that thousands of curious strangers of all stamps are staring at you, and toasted by the sun until your skin will peel off like a peach's; when you might be here at the sand banks with only your brothers and sisters and cousins and the green, solemn swamp about you and the river above your waist?"

That is what the young man said.

"Now, where should Miss Modesty go?" said he.

"Oh, that isn't fair!" cried the ladies. "Everybody goes in the surf. It's really fashionable. The nicest people we know enjoy it. But people don't go swimming that way in mill ponds and streams."

The young man was disgusted. "The nicest people do!" Like other men he hated conformity.

"What do you care what other people do? Don't you know right from wrong on your own hook?" he replied. "It's all right to put your arm around a woman when you're dancing, but not otherwise, eh? Because that's what folks say."

"John, John, John!" said the ladies. "Come let's quit comparisons and analogies. You know the good people about us, to say nothing of the buckskins and bristlers, would talk and tattle;

they would come here and stand on the bank and stare. That would not be staring like the strange crowd at the beach."

But the young man was patient. He told them singly, with the help of his converts, that it was a sin not to enjoy to the utmost the free gift of God in that lovely water that flowed at their feet; that modesty is recognized and respected anywhere; that the less expensive of two equally benefic objects should be taken; that really the girls ought not to risk swimming by themselves (which they daily did), seeing that they had to be too cautious about deep places to have much fun and that rafts might float down at any time with their Negro raftsmen. He made the most of the contrast between the long, stuffy, dusty trip to the sea and the cool, dogwood-shaded walk to the river.

In vain.

There is and has been a happy custom that few or many former residents and their children come back to Riverton to spend their holidays. In the year of grace 1903 came among others Miss Nette McKenzie, of South Carolina, a granddaughter of the village and a charming girl. Moreover, she came from town, with knowledge and news of the world.

It was well understood that she would be invited to go swimming with her masculine cousins (as she was) and that her reply would be influential. She robbed the local ladies of their breath. Said she, "I will."

That was four years in the past. On the 15th of August, this year, towards sundown some twenty-five or thirty people of both sexes married and single, sat on the sward of a bluff called the "Saw Mill." They were chatting and resting after their joint swim. There was no modest blushing or shrinking at all. In those four years, who had heard of tattling? Or had seen curious, vulgar people playing spectators? Or, having joined in, did not find it a merrier time than in the surf?

"It's a shame to call this place the 'Saw Mill,'" said John Watson, now of Florida. "It gives aid to the 'Lumber' scandal. It makes you think of sawdust, smoke, and noise. But look at that white slope, that soft, sandy bottom, and those fringing rushes. The 'Saw Mill,' indeed!"

Of course, there was an enthusiastic agreement that a better name be chosen. But naming things, even babies, is no soft snap. They never would have done well if a newcomer, with unburdened mind, had not put his finger, first trial, on the right button.

"That's easy," he declared. "Ain't a college named after its founder and a law after its author? I'll name the scene of a custom after the one who first practiced it. We all know Nette was the first girl to swim here with men. This ain't the 'Saw Mill;' it's 'Nette's Bluff'."

There she sat, the only blush on her cheek ever caused by the co-swimming at Riverton. She had just been breathed into immortality.

After all, what was the good? The springboard extended over the old deep swimming-hole unbent and the mellow-bugs on the surface below it are no more scattered by plunging naked bodies. A man may not now loiter where he will in the cool wave, with only himself to take care of. Instead he must wade politely by his partner while she swims with the current till she tires, then collect his muscles and drag her back upstream to the starting point. Hot days he must drive her to the bluff. He must build and repair the hut where she dresses. If she loses her ring in the water, he must dive after it until he almost drowns. Oh, it's trouble, trouble! It falls short of the old fashion in many respects. But as the husband, who adopts a life that, coldly viewed is the harder, finds an exceeding great reward, so these co-swimmers would not return to the old way, because the presence of the girls enhances their pleasure until it more than obscures the small unaccustomed duties which come with the new way.

In other words, the co-swimming at Riverton might be described as Artemus Ward described the tomb of Shakespeare: "I have seen it; it is a success."

## A Wild Boar Hunt

The people of Scotland who live about the Round "bay," a large swamp without inlet or outlet, have been pillaged for several years by a wild boar, which kept to the briers and bushes by day and came out by night to fatten in the fields. It is said that his first asylum had been the Shoe Heel swamp, whence he had been ousted first by fire and then by high water. This was speculative, however; for nobody had seen him, and his existence would not have been known save for the damage he did and the tracks he left.

To kill the wild boar was the public desire. Nobody claimed him. Whoever killed him should have his carcass, together with the thanks of the people and the distinction of the deed.

First, a party of lads decided to go on a still hunt for him. They tediously worked their way through the tangled underbrush and vining bamboo, back and forth through the bay. He had the place netted with narrow paths, and the boys found his warm, dry straw beds about at convenient stations. But the wildness was large, and they came out scratched and ragged after a wasted day.

"Come on now, my bully boys," said Arch McMillan, to his younger brothers, when they had heard of the failure of the still hunt. "Let's go to the Round bay and take the wild boar."

They had Nellie, the setter, Scot, the collie, Tip, the 'possum cur, and Vise, the bulldog. With such a varied array of talent they were confident of success. But they hadn't gone a hundred yards into the swamp before they found Vise fast in a steel trap, and that was a calamity. Vise was a recent addition to the family; his owners were still a little shy of him. With his foot between the bars of steel, he was in bad temper, and the boys abandoned thought of the boar to contrive some means to get Vise loose. When they had at last done this, they thought it was time to go home.

Thus many expeditions went out in vain. Fox hunters set their hounds on his trail, but that boar could run like a crow's shadow and dodge like a hare. Fox hounds were his playthings. From time to time the neighbors would agree to give him up. But they couldn't abide the agreement. If it happened to be fall, they

went forth mornings to find their ripe corn torn down, shucked, and partly eaten, partly nozzled in the dirt; if it were summer, their watermelons and green peas would be rooted up wholesale. Oh, the boar had to be taken!

One Sunday at Spring Branch Negro church certain croppers about the Round bay were mingling their complaints of the boar and were wondering that it was impossible to kill him. Allen Shaw overheard the talk. Allen is the last of the famous sandhill deer hunters.

"You say dat bo' can't be cotch?" said Allen, coming closer.

"Dat's wut we sayed," Jim McLaughlin replied. "Dar ain't no way to git him ouden dar but to wait fer a dry time en burn dat bay off. By settin' out far all roun' it we might burn de bo' up. But dogs en men can't ketch him, en burnin' it off 'll kill out de huckleberries."

"Huh! I kin ketch him!" said Allen; "en I'll have powerful little trouble doin' it."

"Wut, you? en you a' ol' man? How you gwine a ketch him?"

"Nemmine," said Allen, mysteriously. "You tell de neighbors to be at de big ditch to-morrer mornin', not to he'p me, but jis' to see some fun."

They laughed at old Allen, but he figured they'd be there, and their white neighbors with them; and they were.

Allen had no equipment but his old, slow-trailing deer hound, Buttermilk. The hound wore a small bell, for he was trained to trail mute and never to move above a trot. With his aid Allen had felled many deer, for he would keep pace with the hound and be right there when the deer rose.

They found some fresh boar tracks in Eli's garden, from which Buttermilk took the scent easily. He trotted off into the swamp, making the bell tinkle cheerfully. The numerous other dogs on the ground were at a loss, and sniffed the ground whiningly. But Buttermilk went on out of hearing.

"Jis' as well stay at one place as anudder," said Allen. "Dat's bo' 's gwine a be stirrin' sooner or later."

They sat on the straw at the margin of the bay. They swapped tobacco and swapped yarns and waited. After an hour, they began to



twit Allen. He took the teasing as no more than he had expected. Presently he stopped whittling his scrap of shingle and said, "Hush!"

"Woof! woof!" was what they heard accompanied by a great stirring and rattling of bluebuck bushes. It was the boar and no mistake, and he was coming their way. They lined up with their guns to pick him off, but, as he came nearer he bore farther into the swamp. It was useless to shoot. The best to be done was to let slip their motley pack of dogs behind him.

It was an immense chase for a while. They waked all the echoes, did those dogs, and shattered all the huckleberries. Some of them were fleet, and some made good their clumsiness with noise. But the boar walked right on away from them. Later in the chase some members of the party saw him, running his best, and reported that the beast thrust his nose out like a wedge, laid back his ears, followed his own well-remembered paths, and split that thick swamp like a bullet. His shape and short legs were to his advantage. Running between tussocks, he escaped the worst of the tangle by going entirely beneath it.

After a while the barnyard pack gave it over and straggled back to their masters.

"It isn't worth while to stay here longer, Allen," said Bluebritches Tom Smith. "That bellcow of yours has gone home."

"Don't be uneasy," Allen assured him.

Indeed the "bellcow" hadn't gone home. Like the stars, he took no rest, he made no haste. He trotted along on the boar's trail, careless of the time the boar had to refresh himself of the time he chose to run. Buttermilk trotted along. Time and again the snorting quarry passed within earshot of the hunters, and as often the assorted pack warmed him up for half a mile or a mile. Time signified nothing to Allen. He had engaged to catch the boar; that was all. And toward sunset he did catch him.

The brute became exasperated. No sooner did he think his escape complete than he heard the tinkle of that dogged bell. It had followed him like a fate all day. His patience at last left him, and he stood his ground.

"Come on; less go en git de bo'," said Allen, when he heard Buttermilk for the first time break the silence. "He's bayed."

The other dogs rushed into the game and joined in the baying. When the hunters got there, the foaming boar was standing his ground, slashing and lunging right and left. Allen acted as umpire. He decided that since Jim McLaughlin had suffered most from the depredations he should give quietus to the beast. This ended the only boar hunt this side of Russia. That this boar was no plaything is evidenced by the fact that his tusks, which are extant, are between two and three inches in length.

## The Equinoctial "Gals"

It is told of an old deacon in a certain country settlement that, when he was suffering from insomnia, his simple neighbors and his family did everything for him inducive to sleep that they knew: they darkened his room, administered household remedies to him, alienated all noise from him, so that if a bird sang too near a pear tree a boy would throw a cob at him to make him go away; the study of the household was silence; and yet the poor old man lay bolt awake. They were in despair for his mind, and sent for the preacher to conduct prayer meeting for him. The prayer meeting had not more than finished half the opening hymn, when some one noticed that the deacon's underjaw was let down and he was snoring. He had been for many years a constant sleeper in church, and the association of ideas brought about by the singing was the opiate he needed.

Yesterday was one of the "eastern gals," as they call the eastern, equinoctial gales in some places. It was as irresistible an opiate to a country-bred man as was the singing of a familiar hymn to the deacon. The rain was not so hard that one might not have hunted squirrels in it all day, but it was much too hard to work in. It was the farmer lad's own particular day. When he waked up yesterday morning and heard that steady rain on the roof, and confirmed his ears by looking out over the drenched cotton and corn and heavy-headed weeds at the field-ends and fallow places, he felt that he was the king. He would make a big hole in that novel he had been nibbling on so long. Though it seemed a little pity that it was Sunday, when he would not have had to work anyhow, yet going to Sunday school was work in some sort, and the eastern gals saved him from that. So after the feeding and after breakfast, off he stole with just a faint apprehension of being called back for Pilgrim's Progress, to his room, stretched gloriously on his bed, with two pillows to prop him, and dived into the big novel. But that steady rain, his comforter, his savior from toil or disturbance, his guarantor of independence, relaxed his interest in the ladies and knights, made

heavy his eyelids, so that the words glimmered and ran together and the book closed on his finger, and he was gone.

And what a sleep was that! It was more than dreamless and deep; it was almost conscious in its luxury. Older people, howsoever weary, never sleep that way; theirs is a light slumber in any event, and, if they be nervous, those abominable enemies to mental refreshment, dreams—with their rapid, unaccountable changes of scene and *dramatis personae*—pass through their brains and keep them hot. It worries even a sleeper to have a snowbird magnified into an elephant before he can fix, or to see his sweetheart, just as she is moving her lips to say some dear thing, run away in the form of a cow. But the most tiresome form of dreaming is to get some hateful platitude or sorry couplet going the rounds, just as regularly as the ticking of a clock, over and over, round and round. The Troubadours made good serenades, no doubt, as music and poetic sentiment go, but in fact they were harsh toward the true loves under whose casements they signed when they strummed their guitars and bade the maidens dream, dream, dream, "Dreamless be thy sleep," is poor serenading, but good hygiene. To wake our farmer lad for dinner his mother had to have him by the ankle and pull him out on the floor. Then his spirit came back out of an unutterable depth and he could strike his hand a time or two over his face, as if to remove cobwebs, and remember, "I am I." (He would have said, "This is me.")

These eastern gals are popular visitors for many reasons. They are the very first heralds of Christmas, for winter to a boy is almost synonymous with Christmas. The gray waste of cloud, as evenly distributed as paint, and the gray waste of rain—out into which the chickens run, bedraggled and shivering, because they know it is in for a set-to—and the closed house, and the fire on the hearth, are all the badges of winter. If work must be done, it is merely indoor work, shucking corn in the barn and packing fodder in the loft. If no work, it's a day of days to hunt squirrels. The spatter of rain will prevent their hearing your tread through the woods, and they are much quicker of ear than eye. It's a time for deer, because odors carry far in the humid air and dogs can pick up his scent at a distance from his lair. All game is taken by surprise. On such a day

the crows do not even put up a sentinel, thinking that no animal, who can obtain food without leaving shelter, would wander about in that weather. Turkeys hate to fly, wet that way, and will escape by running if they can. And—well, there is simply a hilarity in getting wet, drenched, soaked. It is a measly discomfort to get sprinkled, so that you can feel the wet touch the skin in spots; but there is nothing bullier than to fall out of a boat or to hunt all day in a downpour, and, once wet, let it all come!

I suppose the season is about the same to town girls as to country girls. They are all habitués of the house anyhow. I know not how they like the eastern gals. Very likely they have little feeling on the subject, having other things to think about than the weather, all sorts of beautiful things, like themselves and their handiwork. Don't you wish telepathy were more than a theory, supported by coincidences, so that we could overhear their thoughts? That would be more fun than hunting or sleeping during the eastern gals, or than anything else in the world, for that matter.

But all these weeds were planted in the old deacon's insomnia and association of ideas. You see they had a very crooked growth, but their fruit is this: That all the countrymen, come to town, made up their overdue of sleep yesterday morning, unless they fought their inclination, and I daresay they haven't slept so sweetly in many a moon. It was the association of ideas between their boyhood habit and the eastern gals. Not one of them waked and heard that steady music and saw that gray prospect but lay back on his pillow and took all his nerves off guard, with an unbidden recollection of the Negro proverb,

"More rain, more rest."

Perhaps there were a few of them a mite disappointed when the afternoon sun drove his shafts through and scattered the clouds.

## Another Hero—Charles Cooley

Laurinburg, May 9.—Charles Cooley, a youth in his twenties, was buried yesterday at Spring Hill, in this county. The immediate cause of his death was consumption. He was a hero. From his childhood he was industrious, quiet, even shy. He assumed the conduct of his father's farm while he was yet a boy, and he made it a model for his neighbors.

Early this year he was hauling green poles from new ground he had cleared. The wagon body was piled with as high a load as it would hold. Ready to stay home, he told a little Negro who was working with him to stand at the mules' heads, while he climbed upon the poles preparatory to driving. The poles were slick, his footing slipped, and he fell upon one of the mules. This mule made a plunge and threw him upon the other, whereupon both mules had become frightened and reared so that the little Negro stood clear and let them go.

Charles had been tossed back and forth, until he had landed on the outside of the left mule. One of his feet was caught in the harness. The greater part of his body was dragging, but his head in some way escaped the front wheel. The mules now were running as fast as they could draw the load.

The road was a new one, cut out especially for this hauling. Alongside it were numbers of small oak stumps, from which the saplings had been cut with a single stroke of the axe, leaving them sharp pointed. Charles was dragged over these stumps and was cut and torn the length of his body; his head was scarred in several places, and one of his arms was broken.

"I could manage to turn my face so as to see ahead," he said afterwards, "and when I saw a cluster of large pine stumps right by the roadside I knew that my brains would be burst out among them, unless I got myself free before I reached them. The only chance I saw was a little oak just before me. When I came within reach of it, I threw my sound arm about it, resolved to settle my

fate right there; if it pulled me in two, that would be no worse than being brained a moment later.

"It tore me loose from the harness, all right; but I found that one of my legs lay under my back, so that the toe of that foot came over my shoulder by my ear; a good part of the bone of the other leg was left bare. The Negro boy ventured back to where I could see him. I told him to go to the store and tell Bob, but not to go home and tell my mother and sisters any big lie."

The Negro was so scared, however, that he paid no attention to orders, but flew home and told the family that Charles was dead. It was some time before his brother Bob got the news and came after him with a buggy. He did not groan when he was lifted to the seat, during the jolty ride home, or when he was taken into the house. The doctors, who arrived some two hours later to set his broken bones and dress his many wounds, heard no protest or outcry from him. During the wretched weeks that followed he kept his mind off himself, was careful to inquire about the health and interests of his visitors, and, until a week before his death, continued to direct the work on the farm. But at night, when sleep disarmed him, he dreamed that his leg was being driven into a pump pipe, and other such horrible explanations of the pain. When his worse leg had almost healed, the doctors found it to be stiff at the knee. The only complaint he was heard to make between the accident and his death was when they took this knee and forcibly bent it.

Though he lived to be entirely well of his wounds, it was only to die two or three weeks later of consumption, which seems to have been precipitated by the accident. He repeatedly thanked God that he had not been killed outright in the runaway, forasmuch as it was after that time that he had made his peace with heaven.

He was a hero of the first class, and was free from selfishness, the origin of sin.

## Squirrel Hunting

Today has been like old farmside days, when squirrels are best to shoot and eat, and when the gamey cur patrols in the moonlight that part of the field where the coons have torn the ears. At the foot of the pine are scattered the petals of its burrs, and the goodies from its mast have been stolen by cunning teeth. Nestled among the crispy leaves, what seem hickory nuts and acorns are mere shells of the same. The hunter suffers from no lack of "signs," and often when his small dog picks up no trail he himself glimpses a squirrel in a hickory tree and takes his time about shooting.

Squirrel hunting is now out of fashion. Few but young Negroes with single-barreled muzzle-loaders now creep along the margin of swamps gazing up blackgums and oaks. But it is as fine sport as any, nevertheless. A stealthy walker not seldom surprises his game on the ground, somewhere near the hollow pine or cypress which is his city of refuge, and the footrace to force him up an isolated tree before he reaches his nest is as good fun as any flushed covey affords. Once with the squirrel in the isolated tree, the hunter's feeling is one of luxury and leisure. If he shoots and misses, no harm done; there is plenty of time to shoot again and again, until he taps his target and watches him cling and fall, cling and fall from limb to limb, and thump on the ground.

Nor does he get tired, as is the case with the bird hunter. He may sit on a shady log and wait for the squirrels to stir again or for his dog to range. He need not tramp across woods and fields, but may follow paths. There are a hundred reasons why this sport should not have gone out of fashion. That it has done so, however, is a blessed thing for the little bunches of muscle and fur themselves, and any visitor to their haunts will observe at what a rate they have increased.





## II

### On Nature



## The Ocean

We sat last night on the veranda of the Seashore Hotel, listening to the music and watching the dancers. Behind us was the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" which saddened the heart of old Aeschylus twenty-five centuries ago, and made Matthew Arnold cry, "Love, let us be true to one another!" In the still, sunburnt, wind-beaten beach grass insects were shrilling. Presently above the rim of the ocean there shone a red flame of fire, and even while we watched the simple face of the moon came out of the water and gazed across at us. Through the darkness she drove a straight, shining path along the sea, which required but little imagination to transform into the ladder that Jacob saw. The sinuous motion of the silver-white waves might seem anything; might well seem angels ascending and descending.

But on either side of this many-lighted avenue the darkness fell in straight lines. We had to look with close attention to the left and right to see the foaming breakers reach out, take hands, tumble over together—white-armed monsters at play.

"What are you thinking about?" asked a girl, of the man who sat by her.

"Nothing. Not thinking," he replied.

He spoke for all of us. As Keats says of eternity, it teased us out of thought, and left nothing but a great, unutterable sadness, full of hereditary memories, full of ancestral voices, old snatches of song and dateless sorrow. His heart is dead who can look across the ocean at night and stand unmoved.

And yet, where one faced toward the east and bade his soul grow vast, a hundred looked in at the windows into the ballroom, where "the dance gaced through the lighted ha'," in time to the beat of string and pipe. The girl that smiled up into the man's eyes, feeling his strong arm around her, their white-shod feet twinkling and their bodies swaying with the sinuous wave motion—the old sea has seen her come and go for a million years. It is a common thought that the old sea could tell strange stories if it would. But

we turned out backs to the sea and we followed with our eyes the smiling girl with flushed cheeks; it is eternal and she is transient; but better an hour of her than an age of sea and land without her. For one song of the sea there have been a thousand of her and will be till the day when the sea gives up its dead.

This morning the ocean was gray; at 10 o'clock, and one or two hours before and after, it was emerald; at noon it was blue. Since the sky, which much more than Cleopatra, is a thing of infinite variety, so must be the ocean, its mirror. But the blue was at no time today indeed. The sky was dingy, and even the clouds that loitered along the horizon were smoky. Gulls haunted the sound, but not a gray wing went across the main. All day, like a man stranded on a desert island, I have strained my eyes for a sail, but vainly. I am tempted to imagine one for the sake of this sketch; for you are not here and you would, perhaps, think it true. But once started into fiction, I should have to elevate the porpoises which have just now gone by, bearing northward, into spouting whales; and as the mad joy of creation grew in my mind I might overreach myself and cause a "sea serpent" to swim by, a mermaid to thrust her golden curls and pearly shoulders above the wave, a choir of sirens to sing, and Calypso to cast us all under her spell. But when a journalist is assigned to "cover" the ocean he must not try to work up a sensation, for then some of his green-eyed contemporaries, being scooped, would proclaim him as yellow.

Byron covered the ocean, anyhow, in a few lines. He bequeathed to us his voice, and a dozen times today I have heard his words on people's lips. So when the journalist, writing words intended to live but a day, sits in an armchair with his legs across the baluster-rail, casts about in his mind how to shape his story, "Oh, thunder!" is what he says to himself, disgusted—not with the sea, indeed, for that would reflect upon himself—but with his task. It has all been done before, again and again: Coleridge did it; Swinburne and a hundred others did it; it has been done in fact and in myth; and now the feebler speaker should sit silent.

## From the Top of Manufacturers' Clubhouse

It is a question whether there is any great happiness which is not woven with a scarlet thread of pain. The two emotions are warp and woof of us. That is why music saddens at the time it delights us; why "love is cradled in a tear"; why the poets, searching in the garden of the heart, have found no rose without a thorn. Demeter, mother of life, is mother also to Proserpine, queen of the dead. In the midst of her harvest and the sounds of flail and wain, she has never been seen except with tears to her eyes.

The great painter and poet are great because they can express this subtlety. There is no finer lyric achievement than Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean." It is "looking on the happy autumn fields and thinking of the days that are no more" that makes them gather to the eyes; not the melancholy, but the happy, autumn fields.

Sitting here on the club roof garden, look across the city to the hills. The fires have died in the furnaces and left Sabbath-quiet clear of smoke. There is only the faint golden haze of the season on the landscape, laid off with little orchard places, groves clustering about the country houses, and haphazard farms. The barn lofts bulge out with hay, so that the doors could not be closed; on one meadow the hay has been forked into heaps and left over Sunday. There is no stir of life anywhere. The ribbon-white glimpses of roads that lose themselves in the woods are vacant of passengers. There is not a buzzard in the sky. Away back yonder, beyond the crest of pines, loom the azure peaks of the Blue Ridge, gods of Silence. Behind is the spire of the city hall, holding aloft the dragon that spits against the wind, and before, a church spire, crowned with the Cross.

Is that a sorry picture? Well, you paint it. Try if you can steep it in its own sunlight and give it a living radiance; clothe it in its own prophetic atmosphere, so that in the midst of its prophecy, as one reads your words one's mind will hark back to "old, unhappy, far off things and battles long ago." If you can do that you can save it from being a sorry picture, but not unless you can save it from

being a sorry picture. You will find that what you cannot embalm in the amber of speech is the essence, which escapes and leaves a dead thing in your hand.

One cannot store manna, but must take it as it comes; else it loses its savor. One cannot store in words or on canvas, these moving pictures of the year, but must take them at first hand, with the Painter's own lights upon them. The glory changes from day to day, as one star differeth from another, but there is no danger that the glory will fade. It will rise again from its own dust, all ignorant of our little songs and sketches, and men will look over them, as I look over these tin roofs, to the reality. Imitations cost their millions, but to the reality we are all admitted free.

But this is idle talk, for an October Sunday or any other time. Everybody knows how futile is expression; yet it is one of the passions. A man must speak out, paint out, or utter himself on whatever instrument he has. It is really more a record of himself than of the things he records. Seeing that in the universe there are only two things, himself and all else, it is his passion to say how all else seems to him. A painting is never true to nature in the sense that a photograph is; it is superior to the photograph because it is a record of the artist as well as his landscape; it is not a copy, but an interpretation. So is the human pianist superior to the wind machine, and the orator to the phonograph. It makes no difference about oblivion. William Watson didn't mean it when he cried to the autumn, "Oh, be less beautiful, or be less brief!" Why not rather rejoice in change than weep over it, since it is merely change, not conclusion. The inspiring influence of the doctrine of evolution is from its view of life in constant procession.

The sun is almost resting on the mountains, veiled with many tinted clouds. Look at it, if you will, or let it go. There will never be just such another sunset; but tomorrow's will be as fine in its own way. The air is cool; there will be no Katydids tonight, nor indeed till next summer; but there will be Katydids enough then. All day the leaves, I know, have fluttered down on the river and floated away; the thrushes and red birds will soon quit singing, but the naked, purple swamps will be festal with thousands of robins.

Christmas is happier than the Fourth, the gun as good as rod and line, and the fireside as cheerful as the summer woods.

What use, though, in argument! The sun is gone and the autumn dusk is here, a palpable presence, and there still runs in my head, as it has run ever since they sang it in the theatre last night, that air, so much sweeter sung than said,

“Toyland, joy land, little girl and boyland!

When you pass its borders, you can ne’er return again?”



## Alone at Nightfall on a Roof Garden

The first ripples of the cold wave have come with the dusk. The sweetheart of the South has left me on the roof garden alone. Away out through the thicker darkness an engine blows, and waits, and blows, as if it were a mammoth lost from its mate. It is blowing, doubtless, to locate another engine. But have you ever waked in the dead night and heard that signal? The dreariest, most forsaken, loneliest of sounds, next to the wail of a deserted dog. Lights are twinkling in the farmhouse windows. The people would be at their supper now, some under smoky rafters and some in high-ceiled halls. The charm of the weekday nightfall is that then the men come home. Today they have not been away, have eaten and read and talked and slept themselves tired and bored out. The happy citizen tonight is the lover, who parts his hair delicately, works long at his necktie, and saunters out to see his darling-heart. He is sufficient for all things, and for that reason and because it has grown too dim to guide the pencil, I leave the world to darkness and to him.

## Circles

When you pull the stopper from your bath tub, you will observe that the escaping water circles about the hole from left to right, and never in the other direction. You cannot compel it to move from right to left. The ox in the treadmill, or the mule, plods from left to right, and if you change his course it irks him. So do our wild vines—and tamed ones, for that matter—crawl up the tree trunks, their spirals winding from left to right. They say that a man lost on the plains by night makes no progress, because he goes unconsciously with this same circular motion. The earth itself so moves, if you stand, as the geographers advise, with your face northward.

Has anyone ever thought this thing out? The facts are apparent, and they are worth a philosopher's reflection. The law seems to prevail everywhere, from the motion of the earth to the thread on ordinary bolts and screws, the set of an auger, the twist in a string. A waltzer will tell you how difficult it is to "reverse." And so instances will multiply in your mind.

Now, below the equator, if they tell me truly, the spirals of a vine run in the opposite direction from those of our vines. While that fact has some significance it would be of more value to jab a hole in the bottom of a pail down there and note the curve of the water through it; for a vine has some sort of intelligence, but water can but be governed by law. If it is true that nature changes her dance every time she crosses the equator—the mean line between the magnetic poles—then, Mr. Philosopher, thou reconciler among obstreperous facts, there is something large in this inquiry and thou must get thee a good cigar and think it out.

## Daniel Boone and Nature

I wonder was it in the summer or the fall that Daniel Boone, driven by the heat or lured by the maple leaves, shouldered his flintlock and plunged into the wilderness! If it was summer, he was driven; if it was October, he was invited. The wanderlust comes upon a man in the autumn naturally as the nesting instinct comes upon a bird in spring. But I like to think it was summer when Daniel started. He could not sleep at night, for it was sultry; labor by day, in the humid East, was too hard. So he rammed a blue-whistler into his rifle, called his cur, and faced westward.

Ah, wouldn't you have liked to be with him! The cur treed what squirrels were necessary food; he also raised his bristles when he caught a whiff of savages, and thus warned his master. They took it slowly. When they grew tired they lolled in a mountain pool or snoozed on the leaves under a big chestnut. Here a flock of turkeys got up before them with great panic; there the graceful shadow of a fawn stood in some lake; yonder a column of blue smoke issued up from the wooded mountain-side, and thrilled them with the same emotion that Robinson Crusoe felt when he saw the human footprint on his island. By night they heard the howl of wolves and a myriad other sounds of solitude. They did not care whether they should ever go back home; they had no definite end to reach, and day after day, so long as they saw fit to travel, there was nothing but the vast, cool, cathedral forest. Since no language obtained between them, there was never a word spoken, except when Daniel chided or petted the cur.

We people have forgotten how to enjoy solitude. There is but one man in the range of my acquaintance who prefers to go swimming by himself. We must have human companions when we fish. If we are likely to be left alone we provide ourselves with a book. There is little wilderness now to explore, so we hike away on personally conducted tours across the plains, suffer the dreariness of hotels, coal dust, hurry and heat, and content ourselves with making close connection between city and city. When we get home

again we gush with enthusiasm over the good time we have had, when, as a matter of fact, all the cities looked alike. If Daniel Boone had had his choice of these methods of travel, his and ours, he would most likely have taken it afoot, and anyone of us who go on these breakneck trips, if the elements have not been cultivated out of us, would troop with him and shake our fist in the face of every hardship that reared up before us.

## Comfort

In the brilliant light of the club reading room, within the sound of music, what a satiety of luxury it was last night to draw a big leather chair before a window, and stare out on the street where "the wind's wings and fingers dripped with rain!" The long line of frosty arc lights twinkled like stars and each one "wrought its ghost" upon the wet street. Only at intervals you might see a cloaked, stooping pedestrian pass a lighted point or a hay-burner patrolling near the square at a walk, the dreary horse hanging his head and tail and humping his back. It made one think of Kipling's expression, "A sheltered people." The comfort, to be made complete, needed one contrast more: the sound of the rain and wind mingled with the good cheer of the music. In the opinion of two members, however, there lacked something of perfection.

"To enjoy this night at its utmost," said one, "you must either be writing or reading a story that begins with a belated traveler, stranger in the land, who seeks and finds shelter and meets with adventures."

"Not so," said the other: "you need an open fire and four feet on the fender."

But the countryman's heart, which never changes, yearned back to his bedroom under the roof, the best of all places to weather the eastern gales, alias the equinoctial storms.

# III

## The Seasons



## Spring

Elbert Hubbard—who, whether a good or a bad man, says good things—declares that heaven and hell are a habit. It is a startling statement in its suggestion. I think he means by it that if a man's dying will take care of itself, as will also his fate after death, according to the society his life has fitted him for. We are too careful about eternity and too careless about time. Some of the thousands of sermons preached yesterday ought to have dwelt on the revival in the hearts of men rather than resurrection from the grave.

The embers of many an old hope and ambition kindled anew yesterday. If one should live a millennium I doubt not that every April would make him to some extent a boy again, fill him with the dear old dreams that know no logic and see no barriers, clothe again with beauty his barefoot honesty and courage, and cause him to step lightly and feel the universal desire for expression, if only by tossing his hat in the air. There is a revival for you. Yesterday was singing weather. The stables of the city could not supply the demand for horses; the automobiles were not on the streets, but on the highways; the cars bore loads of people to the termini of their tracks, whence they (the people) struck for the woods; a preacher who was expected to address an afternoon Sunday school said, "I will not speak to you, for God is talking today"; men climbed to eminences, such as the Tompkins tower and the club roof, and gazed unsatisfied, at the young splendor of color, billowing away into the solid azure of the mountains; a man quoted, with a lilt in his own voice, as he passed a canary in his cage,

"Summer is coming, summer is coming,  
I know it, I know it, I know it.  
Light again, leaf again, life again, love  
again.'  
Yes, my wild little poet.

"Sing the new year in under the blue.



Last year you sang it as gladly.  
'New, new, new, new!' Is it then so new  
That you should carol so madly?"

No, it is not the season for solemn sermons—and the sermons yesterday were triumphant—but for seeing and singing. Everybody is a poet at heart in April, and a lover. Everybody is close kin to the birds. The fun that is made of the spring poet is not a stinging fun. Even the crow has changed his note and tries his best to sing. I fancy that the editors, who are flooded at this season with wobbly, staggy verse, smile at it and know the why and wherefore. Even the old blue hen with yellow legs quits her cackle for a pretty passable song, and the frogs in the marshes make a choir which cannot be despised. There is nothing in this zone now but beauty, which "is its own excuse for being."

Did you ever think how many men, from the Song of Solomon to Chaucer to our time have tried, each for himself, to grasp the spirit of the young year and set it to word music? None is satisfied with the expression of the other. The thrush will be singing in the swamps this morning the same song—exquisite above all other sweet sounds on earth—that the first thrush sang; he wants to sing it for himself. Nobody ever did or ever will equal that inspired choral song in Atlanta, "The Hounds of Spring"; but everybody will take a try at it. Knowing at the start that it is as far beyond him as the stars, the little rhymester will sing his own song, for the singing's sake, as if the world were newly created and no master voice had been raised in it. The relics of dead men will not do for him.

The thing that stuns one, however, under the prevalent regime of magazine verse, is that, to be available for April or May, the stuff must be shipped midwinter! Think of a well-conditioned man in February, hugging his stove and inventing as lovely a thing as this:

"The dawn is a warp of fever,  
The eve is a woof of fire;  
And the month is a singing weaver,  
Weaving a red desire."

What made that stanza? Not girlish April, indeed, but the same thing that makes the mare go! For the poet got more for that stanza and half a dozen that follow it than Milton got for *Paradise Lost*.

## Easter

If you sat at this window, your chair braced back to the very tip of its rockers, your feet over a table, a pencil-pad on your knee, and, with the task in hand of contriving an Easter hymn of so many lines and such a prescribed length to fit into an inelastic space barred by iron, looked out on the street at the current and countercurrent of men, women, and babies, you would know what the "spring fever" is and why it carries in tow such a troop of synonyms. A delicious languorous, somnatic influence it is, aggravated by tobacco smoke and engendering dreams of hammocks and short stories full of dialogue. Objects fall upon the retina with pictorial effect. That girl over the way with a white kimono and pale blue skirt has stood at her window between graceful curtains and gazed down on the street half an hour at the time, unconscious that I squinted across at her and associated her with the picture of an actress in a show window beneath her. If that little typewriter, shaded by the summery awning, has written a line today, I haven't caught her at it. She is half hid, but that supine wrist, where one hand hangs limply across the machine, tells all. The messenger boys have left their wheels to lean against posts and pavement and would hardly rouse themselves if the fire bell struck.

But that Easter Hymn: it must be had by seven of the clock, and it must be of such and such a size. Now, Muse, come hither, sweet witch! It is no matter of wooing now, but of command, and if you come not smiling I will drag you and cuff you to complaisance. Let me first inform you somewhat about this Easter business: You need seek nothing new; whatever you can possibly say has been said a thousand times; if your mood is light, the Easter bonnet be your theme and the tripping tread of its wearer; if grave, then the old analogy between the annual resurrection in nature (which isn't really a resurrection at all, but a new growth) and the immortal hope of a resurrection from the grave, is all that is left you.

Now, sweet Muse, since it is to be a hymn, that lets the Easter bonnet out. We will dismiss from consideration the pink and white Evangeline, prayer-book clasped to bosom, and so on, according to Hoyle, as play-actors say, we will do "heavies." And, as a starter, how would this line do?

But before she may reply, here comes the boy with two letters, and of course the hymn must be patient. One, in a quaint, small, straight-line hand, from a pen-and-ink artist, encloses a spray of yellow jessamine and says: "I found it in the woods today and I heard a mockingbird." The other says: "The children brought great bunches of honeysuckles, wild violets, and blue flags (iris), and they looked and smelled exactly like those down by the old 'straight road'."

O, Miss Muse, will you take a seat and rest? I must go down and stretch my legs a block or two, and will be back directly. Then, let's go upon the roof garden and see if we can get away from that eternal girl at the window. Anyhow, we can't call this hymn out of the void until we get these jessamines and those honeysuckles under control.

So the spring fever takes you down to Jordan's, where they have come from the east, the west, the north, and the south, and have sat down together. You take a seat at the jerk-water counter, call for your "dope," and as you suck it through the straw (as did that fellow in the song, who "won a mother-in-law") you gaze into the mirror at the reflection of gossiping maids and matrons in the quadrangle. It is all right to stare at them in this backhand fashion, conceived and employed by the Lady of Shalott. Surely it cannot be rude to ogle an image, a mere reflection!

Then, when you stand on the square and look off in the four directions to where the maple leaves have begun to fleck the sidewalks and dapple the streets, you conclude that time was made for slaves and send a wireless message back to the Muse to sleep overnight on the Easter hymn and come back tomorrow. Out and fie on the Easter hymn and the little ironbound space that awaits it!

## College Commencements and Degrees

Soon cometh along the college commencements, all of them much alike in the good time they give. They show in everyday color what the student has been told by Dryden, "Sweet is pleasure after pain." Now is his season of probation; then is his week of triumphal joy. Perhaps, while this line is being written, he sits chin in hand, brooding about the *pons asinorum* (or *pons asinarum*, as the case may be) while the merry noise of the campus mower comes to his ear, the herald of freedom and a whole summer of roses and cool streams. He may have a little something written in miniature on his cuff, as the lawyers say, "to refresh his memory." In most cases he is honest; but you can't tell; and the biggest mistake of simple minds is to suppose that every bachelor of arts knows, on graduation day, as much as every other bachelor of arts or that a master of arts is a great deal better educated than a bachelor. Nobody sets such little store by a college degree as the possessor of one or two. To the untutored, to say that a man is a "graduate" is to surround him with a cloud. Many great men have confessed that, despite their high attainments, they have never known full self-confidence in the company of college and university men; they have felt as if these latter might have something up their sleeves. It was like Emerson's wisdom to say that the chief good of a college education is to teach man its little avail. Thus will the speakers at thousands of imminent commencements reiterate to the academic element in their audiences that they are now but upon the verge of battle.

College men shouldn't fail, having as they do the advantage of the multitude; but when they do fail it is often because of the consciousness of this very advantage. They think they have so much better tools that they needn't work so hard, when, if they only thought accurately, they would know that no tool rusts out so quickly in idleness as the mind. One forgets one's Latin and Greek and modern languages in two or three years; forgets the chemical formulas, the systems of philosophy—except in a general way—and the history. This forgetfulness of the facts which one has learned

is so apparent that canvassers for students must needs know how to explain that, in spite of it, a college course is a good thing. It isn't a good thing for the man who prepared for examination by writing on his cuff; not even the atmosphere does him good, inasmuch as he associates with rascals and, as campus slang has it, "rides." We expect to see him fail. But many a time he makes good, when his classmate, who dived after the facts, got them honestly, and keeps them, peters out. Some say it is because the latter used up his physical vitality as a student—played no games, heard no music; took no social recreation, and faced the world a good wrestler, but with weak legs. His condition brings the philosopher down to the proportionate value of knowledge acquired by study and the mental training incident to it. It isn't so often physical debility as the wrong conception that education is the mere remembering of huge numbers of dates and theorems and names that renders failure sure. It depends upon the man entirely: education can quicken his mettle but cannot supply it. Two A.B.'s may be as wide apart as two lawyers or two preachers.

But why talk in this vein? Is not the campus a rendezvous for all the birds that sing? The mowing machine shears the sward among the big oaks and about the copses of evergreen, so that the slant sunlight falls with a more classic seeming upon it. Less and less glow the lamps that twinkle by night from the dormitory windows, and more and more the mandolin and the guitar wander through the moonlight. The air is sweet with magnolia and vining honeysuckle. There are snatches of old songs, full of sudden minor chords. The grass is dewy and good to lie on, and "winter's rains and ruins are over." There is no false note here; this is the part of it which the Philistines should weep to have missed; there is no compensation in life for its loss, nothing else like it. Poetry bubbles up in the heart, and philosophy hobbles away and hides, it is "Who cares to lie with me under the greenwood tree?" And "Falero, lero, loo."

A sad thing about a large proportion of Southern students is that they are so prosaically poor. They must figure on every cent, and, when examinations are over, slip away for home, to save a week's expense of pleasure and to take a hand on the farm. Maybe high cotton will change this; maybe the jeans fellows will share the

prosperity of their section enough to indulge in commencement clothes without the discomfort of conscious extravagance, and relax from a year's study to thrill to the blare of horns and rattle of snare drum as well as to the eloquence of the big bug who comes from afar and the chitchat of girls in white dresses. The college year is not complete without all this. The week of warm airs, new faces, music, and freedom will cast back over the gray, straightaway stretches a soft light, which memory will make the most of in her angel task of suppressing the weeds from among the flowers of life.

## Fourth of July at Riverton

When the July magazines come out with cover designs of the Liberty Bell, the Stars and Stripes, exploding firecrackers and other symbols of Independence Day, people who live in the currents of life may well suppose that the whole nation goes wild over the annual celebration. But it may be said of the United States as of North Carolina, that it lives in the country, not in the town; and the country does not fly flags, ring bells, nor shoot firecrackers. It hoards its explosives until Christmas. Southern country youth of both races think more of the Fourth as the proverbial date for the first ripe watermelon than as the nation's birthday. The Southern farmer's boy may or may not have it for a holiday; he cares little; he then is on the eve of a long succession of holidays, in pressing forward toward which he would not mind ignoring the Fourth. This long succession of do-nothing days known as "layin-by-time," the blessed season between tillage and harvest. Laying-by-time comes early or late according to the midsummer rains, and seldom the Fourth is merged in the holiday month; when, of course, it can add no other drop to the beading cup of joy.

Down in Scotland county, the farmers were up with their crops last week. "General Green," the metaphor of crabgrass, had been for the time routed, and his enemies were resting on their arms. It was an unspeakable luxury to lie in bed and hear the kingbirds and jays and orioles wake and start their quarreling and singing, without ever a prod from one's sense of duty. There is such a difference between idleness and rest! Last Wednesday there was not anything to do anyhow, and why should a man remember an arbitrary holiday when he had earned a natural one?

Looking eastward over the cornfields, struck across here and there by the earliest sunlight, to the line of cypresses that advertise the river's course, no man but an almanac devotee would think of naming the day with a figure, but would and did sigh and pat himself and thank his planets for the larger comfort of freedom from toil.



It was not until after a late resort to the stables to feed-up and a leisurely breakfast by "big daylight," that the dogs and boys got together for the river. The talk on the way was in criticism of the work of the several ploughmen as exhibited by the pathside; one had laid-by his corn with a turn-plough and fired it, while another had lightly swept his and so preserved it green. Everyone had out a keen eye for the first cotton blossom. One enterprising young man was bent on fencing the river swamp with barbed wire to secure the reeds for pasturage. There were several black-and-tan hound puppies along, all of high descent, and their pedigrees and promise were talked over. Two hundred yards on the hither side of the swimming hole the company came upon Annie Smith, picking blackberries. She looked up, somewhat guiltily, and threw her bonnet back.

"This is pretty work for the Fourth of July, isn't it!" she condemned herself.

The boys looked at each other with wide eyes.

"The Fourth o' July!" they cried, in chorus. "By George!"

But there was no demonstration. Annie stooped again to her blackberries and the young braves struck a trot for the bluff.

## A Little Child Starting Off to School

This being the first of September, is a heavy-hearted time for the children of the world, anyhow for the country children. The golden summer, rich in liberty, is gone, in all things except its heats, and now must book-sack and dinner basket be taken from the shelf and the "scholars" must go to school.

A blessed thing about the faculty of memory is that it involuntarily lets grow dim whatever was unhappy and keeps bright all else in degree. No man but recalls his school days with unalloyed pleasure and sighs to relive them. The school patron who attends the Friday afternoon exercises and "speaks to the children," warns them in foreboding terms that these are their happiest days and that they had better make the most of them.

He thinks he is speaking truly and sincerely. But the poor homesick boy gathers that life must be a right hard task. His small keen griefs are uppermost then. Dearer to him than dreams of glory is physical freedom; and school is captivity. When chalk dust floats in the murmurous air and time is sleepy-footed, he sees from his window the hunters go by and his heart almost breaks. He sees no sense in it all. Why should he know where Afghanistan is, or that John is a noun, or that Alfred was king, or that 8 times 7 are 56? The steps toward knowledge are so short and slow that he never gets a panorama view. He feels himself unjustly treated when he is whipped for poor spelling. School to him is an undeserved punishment. A little boy, loitering at the gate and being urged off to school by his mother, sobbed, "Mamma, what does the teacher pay you?" Her reply presented a problem to his mind which he did not solve for months.

He soon learns to go early to get the half an hour of play before books; but the bell to him is not a chime; it is a knell. The ten-minute recesses he fills with riotous life, nipped in the bud. The noon intermission of an hour and a half is the heaven of his desire, shut off in the glare of its glory. Then till 4 o'clock there remains only an inquisition. He knows the route that the sunbeams

must travel. If they should reach the point he has marked for "school's out," and school is not turned out, he feels rebellion grow big in his breast.

The only hour of unmarred joy the day brings him is when he sets out on the tramp home. There is nothing till tomorrow, thank heaven! He may saunter slowly as he pleases. If he lingers to dam the brook and turn it into a new channel, nobody suffers for it. He may turn his wild imaginings to their wings, may fancy himself in palaces, in senates, red and rough with battle, the center about which the universe revolves, world-watched, feared, envied, and loved. For at that age every mind is richly creative; every child is an exuberant poet. If he flushes a flock of turkeys or a covey of quail, if a fox looks at him a moment and steals away into the wood, the thrill runs through him that has run through a thousand of his hunter ancestors. Perchance he picks up a few of his father's sheep and cattle and herds them home. In any event, that hour is a rose without a thorn, and memory needs not to work it over.

Then, when he gets a little older, new pleasures and jealousies will crowd his path. He will find where the purplest fox-grapes and the blackest—there are degrees in blackness—muscadines hang, and will gather them for the girls. When we are become men, unless there has been a careful record of the emotional experience, we are sure to set the date of love's young dream years later than it should be set. There is many a child of eight deeply in love, sometimes with a contemporary, but oftener with a woman of twenty. Those who have forgotten the details of their childhood will scout this as preposterous; but it is all the same true, and boys of eight who read these lines will blush.

As soon as he gets in love he interprets life in its tender terms. Not yet understanding the end of knowledge, he applies himself to his books that he may win praise and impress her for whom he sighs. Here begins a consuming desire, "the last infirmity of noble mind," the quest for fame; and the motive then is the motive that impels him all his life to "scorn delights and spend laborious days." A flogging is now a mental anguish, where it was but a physical terror; the study hour is a coveted imprisonment, when he may stare above his book at her curly head; and playtime discovers the

strangest paradox in life, that love breeds war. If his sweetheart is on the ground, he is quick to quarrel and eager to fight. Women, from five years to ninety, love a fighter, as all other female animals do, and he knows this, as all other male animals do, without being told.

So now is a dreary day only for the tot that racks along behind his elder sister, clinging to her hand and choking with sobs. Poor kid! He ought to enjoy a longer lease of freedom. He is too tender for rules and duties, and too recently from heaven for earthly endeavor. But thousands of them will be on the way this morning, and they will never forget whether the teachers are kind or unkind. They will be glad to cuddle in their mother's arms tonight and lisp into their ears the history of the first hour of school: how many scholars there were; all the teachers said and did; who are their desk-mates; whether they were turned back or set forward; a hundred nothings to which their mothers will listen with smiling interest. Much more than March 4 is this inauguration day; and all the grown folks, returning from their vacations and buckling down again in the chase for the dollar, should, each of them, chuck some gloomy-faced toddler under the chin and cheer him up.

## Fall

The bobwhites are now calling across the corn to one another. That delicious smell of harvest is in the air. The countryside is hushed from labor, the cattle wade up to their bellies in meadow grass, and there is everywhere a massive sense of plenty and leisure. The bullbat from the dazzling sky and the locust from the leaves serenade each other, and there is a sheep bell somewhere.

Soon it will be time to expect a windfall of hickories and walnuts every morning. The sassafras leaves are aflame, the poplar is sprinkled with yellow, at the heart of the blackgum there begins to burn a rich, regal red. The maple is delaying her splendors, but in response to all the wandering breezes a few birch leaves flutter down, just to remind the barefoot boy that summer is almost gone by and that between now and Christmas stretches a wide, white cotton field.

When the dog fennel gets in bloom its faint odor will blow everywhere, the faintest, finest odor in nature. Along the lanes and in the pastures it will wave its fantastic whiteness in the moonlight. Not being relished by cows and sheep, it has the advantage over its neighbors, the ragwort and Jerusalem 'oke. But, speaking of the fennel's perfume, it is as idle to compare flower scents as the beauty of women or the charm of orators. Think of waterlilies, arbutus, ironwood, and wild honeysuckle!

Pretty soon the sunsets will begin to be glorious again and the twilights long. The wood ducks will be flying from the river to the acorn feeding grounds, while the west is shifting its unlimited display of colors. Herons will flap their slow way, suspicious of hidden gunners, and far overhead, to the roost, and the owls will laugh like drunkards, at nothing. Yesterday a man was looking at a sunset painting and pooh-poohed it as false to nature. But who is the critic that ever saw two sunsets alike? The panorama is never repeated; never may you see that long thin blade of bright blue out the drifted clouds in just the same way. Every moment, as Austin Dobson says, is unique, and the painter must "draw the Thing as

he sees it." No wonder Wordsworth sang his greatest song of that Presence "whose dwelling is the light of setting suns."

It is the marigold "that goes to bed wi' the sun and with him rises weeping." The habit of the primrose is the very opposite. One can hardly think of a summer twilight and leave the primroses out. It is as if Proserpine, when the sun goes down, stole into green lawns and along dusky highways and lighted her lamps. Like the lights of a city, they burst in bloom, fairies that fear the sun's face and that come out to play all night with the wind.

## Riverton in Fall

The meadow lark, alias the ol' fiel' lark, has come again. If you walk along the turn-row of a cornfield and look down the middles, you will see him scoot along through the faded grass for five or ten steps, and then stand still and flare his yellow breast at you. If you advance on him, up he hops into the air, flaunts his flattened tail at you, makes half a dozen quick strokes, and sails away leisurely. He isn't fit to eat, but what a target he is! And his whistle is a tonic.

Yesterday, far overhead, I saw a flock of robins on their southward pilgrimage, and later heard a company of them chattering over the fresh blackgum berries and 'possum haws in a swamp. This chatter is an entirely different utterance from the robin's quiet summer song; it is the most festal sound in nature.

A hale and hearty welcome to the heralds of winter and Christmas! Pretty soon now, long lines of wood ducks at sundown will leave their streams and fly across the bottomlands to the sandhills for their streams and fly across the jack acorns. Every boy who has a gun has already wiped its barrel clean of the summer's rust and laid him in a supply of shells. In the towns the show season and the social season, and in the country the oyster suppers and festivals and scamperdowns are in full swing. Marts hum with traffic; woods flame with beauty; every man's pocket is stuffed with money and every schoolhouse with children; yet there is nothing melancholy about them. "The happy autumn fields," the halcyon sunshine, the smack of frost, wake in a man the wanderlust, give him a zest for business, banish the languor from his brains and muscles, and grant him a new contract with life. The melancholy—Whoopie! Blow the horn and saddle the horse!

The window here—this is down in Scotland County—looks over a wide stretch of stripped cornstalks and empty shucks, fluttering in the wind. Beyond the cornfield is another wide stretch, clean across which runs a well defined division between white and brown, showing the point to which the cotton-pickers have come.

But the eye will go beyond these to the river swamp, where the hues are blended as if it were a watercolor picture. The brilliant gold must be poplar; the rich purple, sweetgum; the burning red, blackgum, and the bright, startling red is certainly maple. There is not much brown left on the old flat-topped cypresses, for they have already sprinkled most of their small, crispy leaves down on the current and seen them float away.

The screen has been taken from the fireplace and tossed into the lumber room. The fire makes a soft sound, like crunching footfalls in snow. The wind groans about the chimney as of old, and finds some entrance at the window to stir the curtain. Just outside an old, gnarly sassafras tree is trying to hold the remnant of its leaves, which, however, are swept from it by dozens, and two birches have turned their backs on the riotous wind and let their long supple limbs stream like garments before them. It all gives a fellow a right cozy, comfortable, no-hurry feeling; a sort of preparatory Thanksgiving frame of mind.

This side the swamp proper is a little clump of woods, whither I am going as soon as I have knocked out the rest of this column and had something to eat. It is on the hillside that slopes down to the swamp. Since the woods are on the southern side, the hill itself and its cedars and spruces keep the north wind away, and the slant afternoon sunlight strikes through and warms the freshly-fallen pine and cedar straw.

It's a good carpet to roll around on, if you watch for the holly leaves, and there are more strange sounds to hear there than anywhere else. It used to be a pasture, when the cedars and scrub pines were quite small. The sheep and shoats scratched themselves against the needly bushes until they wore off the young limbs. If you went there and didn't know the history of the place, you would be puzzled to find a cedar with a whorl of limbs barely above the surface and a naked space of trunk supporting its bossy top. But that's the way the sheep and the shoats recorded their presence. Indeed, if the flying-squirrels had not been such eager thieves of nesting material, you might now find a wisp of wool caught behind a scale of bark.



A bold little stream runs along the foot of the slope into the tangle of buck-huckleberry bushes and reeds and heart-leaves that margin the swamp. This afternoon it will be fighting its way with the drifting ticklegrass and pine straw. The boys used to have a good time when they could slip off after dinner Sundays and clean that branch out, and make waterfalls along it, with a flutter-wheel at every fall. If the girls managed to slip away, too, they did not fool much with the laborious dredging and fluttering-wheel construction, but diverted themselves with the more feminine pastime of chafing heart-leaves to make them smell sweet and gathering bachelor buttons for the gold of the bloom and the fragrance of the root. With these jewels they adorned themselves, and with the beautiful blooms of snakesbane, until, like the Assyrian's cohorts, they "were gleaming in purple and gold."

It is a benediction to visit that place, a wholesome, back-to-nature influence. Perhaps that choked branch will have help this afternoon in clearing its channel, and maybe the bachelor-buttons and heart-leaves and snakesbane will think the Vandals are on them again.

One of the women who are picking cotton way yonder is wearing scarlet headgear and two others have bright blue jackets. The color, against the brown perspective, is as lively as a blooming geranium in a window. The women are emptying their sacks now at the end of the row. They have thrown them on the whiteness that heaps their sheets. The bell has not rung for noon yet, but it cannot be long; for they know the time of day by their shadows, and they think it not worth while to start another row.

So much for writing "with the eye on the object." But a little girl said as much as all this this morning, when she danced around, rejoicing, "Oh, I'm so glad fall's here and winter is comin'!"

"Why?"

"Cause."

## Hallowe'en

Tonight is Hallowe'en. Though it is a Church festival (not one of those you attend with a razor in your shoe), it, like Christmas and Easter, is of pagan origin and comes down to us with a minimum of worship and a maximum of delightful superstition.

Tonight is when the witches and fairies are so active that Hecate and Queen Mab may see each other in the woods. It is an all night frolic with both crews. Tomorrow morning watch if you don't see fairy hammocks white among the broom-sedge and bull-grass. Vulgar minds pronounce them spider webs wet with dew; but you and I know, and the half-naked ancestors of ours, several thousands years ago, knew. When you dream good dreams it's the fairy queen; bad, it's the old mother of the hags.

Just as surely as a thunderstorm will make the milk sour, so sure are strange things abroad on Hallowe'en night.

See in the morning if your horse's mane and tail are not knotted and twisted so that the currycomb will not run through them. Even the tassel on the cow's tail, and maybe the goat's beard, will have been worked on by the infernal witches, full of malicious mischief.

But the goat is one barnyard denizen—not to say citizen—which stands in with the witches. They do not always fool with his beard. Often, indeed, has he been known to attend their weird, diabolical dances, looking gravely on, in the lurid light of the witch-fire, with that same wist, amused expression which he affects at home. There is nothing creepy about him, so he walks the fence next day with as much nerve as ever, and when you look at him the twinkle in his eye says, "I could tell you a tale if only I would."

But those visitors from the unseen worlds come late at night when it is time for honest men to be asleep. The Hallowe'en ceremonies should be over.

All these ceremonies have a single purpose; to discover the future husband or wife which you are to enjoy. If you go to a south-running spring and dip your left shirt sleeve in it; hang the wet sleeve up to dry, and lie down yourself near the fire, at midnight

you will see your consort come and turn the drying garment. If you go to an oat stack in the field and circle it three times, on the third round you will catch your companion in your arms. Of course you must make all these expeditions alone. If you prefer, take the doors at both ends of the barn off their hinges, and proceed to winnow three bags of wheat; while you are winnowing the third your beloved will pass in at one door and out through the other. Or take some hempseed and sow it in a lonely place, saying, "Come after and harrow," and over your left shoulder you will see the object of your care in the attitude of harrowing. Or take and eat a red apple while you comb your hair; over your shoulder you will see whom you pine for. Or walk backward to the garden and pull the first stalk of kale you come to; if it be straight or dwarfish, so he or she. Or put two nuts on the hearth; if they leap together, fair befall thee, if apart, foul. Or into a tubful of water cast some apples and bob for them; you will speed ill or well according as you bob. The same thing is to suspend apples from the ceiling by strings.

Having tried one of these spells in vain, advance to another, and so on through the catalogue. If you leave a charm untested, that may be the effectual one. But whatever you do, find yourself inside the house before midnight on peril of being ridden by witches and pinched by fairies, or, if you are a Negro, chased by ha'nts.

Go with the tongue of a piebald possum or the tooth of a senile coon, if you are a Negro, to an old-field graveyard, where frost and heavy dew is on the fennel, where a slow wind moans through the pines, and where there is not another sound than that which the night seems to make when she stirs in her sleep. Go and sit on a white gravestone under a cedar and wait there a while. What you will see will be enough.

## New Year's Resolutions

If you were to ask Capt. Bason when the first "new leaf" was turned over, he would make one of three replies: When Adam was a boy, or When the woods were burned, or When Buck was a calf. All these are in his mind synonyms for long ago. The first human settler on this globe, whether we please to call him Adam or Aborigine, must have had some sort of moral sense and must have been glad, when his New Year's Day came, that he had another chance. Upon the recurrence of that day, if he observed any rude mental division of time, he would turn over a new leaf, as you and I turned one yesterday. It is a fertile subject of humor as everything sacred, such as love and marriage, is; the cartoonists have pictured the water-wagon crowded with chairs, ready to take on its load of passengers; the jokers have made the world smile; and the point of humor is the struggle between human aspiration and weakness, the unfailingly brave start and the frequent shameful relapse. It is a blessed thing that, however often we may vow and fail to live up to it, the calendar fixes an arbitrary date whereon we are stimulated to stand up and go straight again.

Sunday was the best day the preachers have had in a long while; looking on the last leaf of the old book, with the new book just at hand. Thousands of them spoke in platitudes, saying the old, old things, as what I write here is as old as Adam. The best text they could have found—if they will pardon me—is, "And Daniel purposed in his heart." They told about the old book scrawled in stumbling character, wet with tears, stained with sin; and the new as white as sunrise, fresh as dawn. That sermon suited the mood of most people in Christendom, and many a man got on his knees last night who had all but forgotten how to pray. It is tough luck for the man, since today the world's business sets apace with many changes, who has too much inventories of goods on his mind to permit an inventory of himself. 1906! Another year in history—old ships lifting anchor for another cruise and new ones launched. It is something to feel rather than to discuss, something that brings

a man right close to life and makes him strive to see it clearly, since he cannot come back ever to look again. It takes the jest off his lips, as if he were far out to sea alone. It brings home to his heart again the difference between drifting and compassing, "the little done, the vast undone," and the enormity of the sins of idleness and unkindness. Even a century blocked off in the world's history seems hardly considerable; a schoolboy covers many of them in a day; yet of all the population of the earth, virtually none who set sail from one margin ever lived to sight the other. The whole world that saw the start of this century five years ago will, when it closes, be "one with Nineveh and Tyre," and since nothing exists except in consciousness, there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

This reflection is wandering into too wide generalities for a discussion of the annual resolutions. Perhaps it does not produce the best temper for resolutions, being an emotional temper. It brushes the ashes from the coals of reverence however which time gathers over them and it makes tender for a time at least, the tough heart of manhood by bringing it back to primitive things, the wide and high things that childhood knows. He is a rare spirit among us who might not grieve with Flood that he is further off from heaven now than when he was a boy.

"A little over a year ago," said a man last week, "that land you see yonder was the subject of a lawsuit. It had been in the courts 20 years. The parties had spent in fees and other things twice or ten times its value—I don't know. The neighborhood took sides, of course. When it came to trial it was hard to get an impartial jury. It took almost a week in hearing; went to the Supreme Court; came back for a new trial and consumed another week, and went to the Supreme Court again. It almost broke the fortune of the man that lost, and completely broke his spirit. Now both the parties are in the ground, and both the leading lawyers; the land has been sold by the winners of the suit, who have moved away and invested the money received for it in a concern, which has collapsed and left them nothing but a memory. The severest cross-examination I ever heard was of a witness by a lawyer in this trial, both of whom are now under tombstones.

Do not you think this a good story for the season?

People might suspect this stunt-writer of trying to preach, if he did not do such violence to homiletics. Here he has again sauntered away from the subject of resolutions and the text about Daniel purposing in his heart! The main thing is that the day offers another chance, not only to the dope-fiend, the booze artist, and the gambler, but to us smooth sinners who are impatient of the ones who have been caught up with. Our resolutions will contemplate the possibilities of a year. If you and I would only be sober, industrious, and economical from this day to the first day of 1907, we might leave some trace of ourselves in history; and if we should keep nothing but kindness in our hearts we might easily be happy. But the cartoonist and the jester are careful observers; they know the truth pretty well, for there is no fun in a pure lie and one cannot make a living out of pure lies. It's a sorrowful fact that, for all our blazing new roads, most of us will find the old ruts easier and fall back into them before many days. We know that the new road will be better in all respects when well worn; but the old road, crooked as it is, stands ready right now for rubber tires and smooth riding; it may not go anywhere, but it's a good time en route. But even the futile effort to beat out a path with stubborn direction will be worth while and will be wholesome exercise. And maybe some of us may hold our course clean through the woods. Or, to change the figure, it were better that a man be Oslerized if he should never be fated to write in present tense the verb, as Tennyson himself would later have written it,

"I held it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things."

The stunt artist would not presume to write in this vein except as a sinner and except for the belief that everybody else, not too steeped in worldliness, will feel more or less the same mood. It's a new leaf, a new calendar, a new job, a new chance, new figures at your letter head—1906—a mere state of mind, of course; but what is there in the universe except a state of mind?



## IV

# Reflections and Recollections





## The Bachelor

Winter is closing down now, and we shall see the old picture and read the old story of poverty in the streets looking through the window into the warm, ruddy chamber of the well-to-do. There is usually snow in the picture, and in the streaming window-light the street face shows pinched and pale above its ragged shawl. Everybody has seen it in fact or imagination and been touched by it. But there is a common poverty, almost if not quite as sad, rarely the subject of painter or poet; heart-poverty, of the men who might have, but have not a home.

One by one yesterday the men at the stag boardinghouse came from their dinner into the smoking-room to enjoy a cigar. The clouds hung low outside. Wet leaves were constantly falling from the old oaks in the yard and the wind was strong enough to scatter from their drifts those that had already fallen. The room was "curtained and closed and warm." A fire burned merrily in the open grate, about which the men drew up easy chairs to make the most of the hour of comfort and rest. A minister was there, two or three physicians, a musician, one or two newspaper men, half a dozen drummers, half a dozen merchants and salesmen, and others. The names and business of some of them were not known to all the rest. Four of them were at a little table, in a game of setback. The talk was intermittent and choppy.

"Why, John," said one to another, "I hadn't noticed that you are about to go bald."

"Yes," said John, not taking his eyes from the grate.

"Why don't you try herpicide?"

"Herpicide?" John smiled. "I have tried all sorts of cides and vigors; you can't teach me anything about 'falling hair,' old man, I was not born yesterday. When the ticket agent went to punch my mileage book the other day, he looked at me carefully and punched 'middle-aged.'"

The musician went to the window and stared out at the street, along which hundreds of children were trooping homeward from

school, their heads ducked against the slant rain. Presently he sat to the piano and began playing off the sheet of music that stood on the rack, "Neath the Shade of the Old Apple Tree."

"Well, I'm going up to the club," yawned one, tossing the remains of his cigar into the fire and standing up to stretch himself. "Come on, whoever is ready."

They got into their topcoats and gloves in the hall, sallied out into the rain with good umbrellas, and took their familiar way to the Holy Mountain, the club. There were handsomely fitted lounging places, carpets and ceilings and walls to please the most fastidious eye, books and magazines, writing desks, card tables, fine service—luxurious comfort and abundant amusement. No pinched face, no shabby coat, no empty stomach there. If the countryman, shivering on his wagon, could have got a glimpse of these men, swung back in chairs upholstered with leather, his heart would have sickened with envy. He would have called them the favored children of fortune. But God in heaven, if he could also have seen the real poverty of their lives!

These are the homeless. Each of them harks back to the days when he was one of, say, a hundred students in a dormitory, chafing under the monkish life even then and eager for vacation and his mother and the girls. His heart, half rebelled then; but now there are lines on his face, a frost is stealing into his hair, his pace in life is settled, and he is a man in the world of men. The years, whether he admits it or not, are beginning to be a terror to him. He thinks of it by night, lying on his bed with its one pillow. About him there are only well-modulated voices and gentlemanly decorum. He would surrender all his other ambitions for the happy noise of children and for a woman's wifely hand in his, to whom he might say, "Come and grow old along with me." The painters and poets can depict the other poverty in all its material, physical pathos; but that compared with his is as the surface to the sea. A slow uninterrupted, longing loneliness—called by the world the selfish life. It is the penalty of the abnormal. Bachelors have since the beginning made a jest of old maids, as one laughs to keep back the tears or as one turns the joke on another to divert it from one's self. To adopt Kipling's lines:

"Oh the thirst that knows no slaking!  
Oh the Heimweh, ceaseless, aching!  
Oh the far dividing sea and alien plain!  
Youth was cheap—wherefore we sold it.  
Gold was good—we hoped to hold it,  
And today we know the fullness of our gain."

An intimate history of some of these men would thrill the world. Many of them, perhaps, have had their little affairs of the heart, dying with the roses of a summer. They have let day slip into day without any sufficient provocation to marriage. The women they met pleased but did not take them captive. They have never been able to say, looking one steadfast in the eye, "I have moved through a world of women, seeking you."

Others of them have set all their worships at one shrine and received no blessing. Too sad and sacred is this to them for public parade; their most intimate friends do not suspect it. Each of them is to the world merely a good fellow; but Somebody knows.

A representative of the third class is the man who is hacked. Several times rejected, he is far from confident of himself. When he approaches a girl, she winks across the room at a friend. She gets rid of him as soon as decency will permit. Whoever is overtaken by him and forced into a street promenade is the object of her chums' pity. Any woman of his own class would wither single before having recourse to him. He is, according to the coon song, "A Jonah Man," and must, if possible, be got off the social ship. And, poor fellow, his case is the saddest of them all; he who would and cannot.

Mr. Dooley brags to Hennessy that he is a "professional parent." He well might brag; for the greatest thing any man does (or ever has done) is to keep the race going, whether or not he believes in that "far off divine event toward which the whole creation moves." Every stag boardinghouse represents a big break in the Creator's endless chain, and surely its inmates serve no purpose in life, unless living is itself, in some way, a service.

## Flirting

A woman doesn't shy off from a man who has the reputation of a flirt. That reputation is really an advantage to him. It piques her to tame him and to earn the glory of being the enchantress who will lead him at last to take hold on the horns of the altar. Then the story he tells her, when she reproaches him for being flirtatious is as old as man and as effective as when first employed.

"It was, indeed, that early love,  
But foretaste of this second one,—  
The soft light of the morning star  
Before the morning sun."

Then, according to Dr. Hall, he said, "Wilt thou?" and she wilted.

## Religious Bigotry

A cartoon in some funny paper a few years ago represented Shakespeare in an interview with some newly arrived scholars to the land of shades. They pressed him to know if Hamlet were really mad or feigned madness. Shakespeare told them that they had accumulated so much proof of both contentions that he was at a loss about Hamlet.

The recently expressed differences of opinion about theology in this neighborhood, each opinion with a library behind it that would fill a barn, suggests to the lay mind that the accumulation of theories and explanations about the Bible have tended to the neglect and misapprehension of the Bible itself. A reverent cartoonist might picture the Apostle Paul in the midst of souls new to heaven, listening to their account of the years of theological architecture since he died. Surely the expression on his face would be worth study! So knit with the teaching of the text itself has been the teaching of theories—creeds, commentaries, catechisms, confessions, and what not—that it is a tedious process for the learned and unlearned to unravel them. We laugh at the Schoolmen and their hairsplitting, but are we not their heirs and do we not guard parts of their legacy to us jealously?

We still grow loud in our efforts to reconcile free agency and the perseverance of the saints, and after long and exhausting debate, sigh and say, "I.o, a mystery!" The doctrine set out in the Apostle's Creed, say, has been so long taught us, that by a sort of heredity and by personal tuition, we have a conception of it as a wholly sacred thing, which it were sacrilege to question. Prefix it with "Credo" and we will suffix it with our names, without daring to think if we do believe its statements. To one who thinks it, the sacrilege lies rather in the statement of a faith which leaves out of account that Christ's life was an example to us of love, that gives us an entirely intellectual basis of religion, as all the creeds do, and yet awe us from the freedom of intellectual inquiry. That a man can force intellectual beliefs no one will contend sincerely; then

the fathers have made liars of a majority of Christendom by their successful tyranny, whereunder men have through two millenniums subscribed to dogmas about which they had no rational conviction whatever. Let us not censure the fathers, though; we who try to tyrannize one another. Our boasted spirit of tolerance—does it not flourish in proportion as our opinionated religious fervor cools? A few strokes at the bellows would kindle the fire. We can't stand a miscreant, a man who stands clear of, not the Bible, but the creeds. The word has come down to us with as much odium as that of dastard, sneak, knave. In other words, is not theology, man's science of God, a bully?

This is a mighty touchy subject for a layman to talk on. But what is the poor layman to do? He can not quit his job and dive into the mastery of theology in order to prepare himself to speak out in meeting. What he ordinarily does is to subscribe for a newspaper which holds his political brief and employ a preacher to repeat to him from Sunday to Sunday what he already professes to believe about religion. If he ventures out into the subtleties, the learned will whip him back, humiliated. "Oh," he yawns, "we have theological seminaries to teach the clergy; there is economy in a division of labor; I will just commit that matter to my preacher. Go and ask him what I believe." "Godfathers and godmothers," says a catechism, "are given in baptism in order that they may promise, in the name of the child, what the child itself would promise if it had the use of reason." And the ordinary child, when he acquires reason, will reason about other things, and promise in this matter anything. Isn't it strange that, instead of aspiring, as did Bacon, to take all knowledge as our province, or as the men of Mars Hill to learn some new thing, we will pay our money to have old truths and errors, as the case may be, hammered into us from the cradle to the grave and will not only not covet and encourage but fiercely resent innovations and independence of thought? Indeed, it is one of the wonderfulest things in the world, but it is, as Mr. Avery used to say in Kipling's phrase, one of the "just-so" things.

Does it do more harm or more good, theological agitation, "men's ungodly quarrel about God"? Did argument ever dissuade

or persuade in this field? As old Addison declared, "A great deal may be said on both sides." Preachers of different denominations used to hold public debates and perhaps come to blows, when the limits of assertion were reached; but neither of the debaters or the following of neither went there with open minds. Nothing came of it but bitterness. If agitation would excite thought, it would remove the scum from "the stagnant pools of theology," which Walter Page thinks has hurt the South so. But instead of exciting honest thought, it would merely put members of the several denominations to preparing briefs, as if they were attorneys in court. It would not bring the advocates of the new and old theologies, so called, together, but would completely alienate them. If you are a Methodist and your neighbor a Presbyterian, it is doubtless wiser that you should talk of vineyards and oxen.

To the lay mind, poor uninformed thing that it is, there seems a great pity in the human accumulations and refinements about the Scripture, and about the simple, beautiful, lovable life of the Christ. He said that men must become as little children to enter his kingdom, not as sages. He told Nicodemus that the spiritual birth could not be explained. Yet we who worship him and cherish through him the immortal hope, never cease from our efforts to explain and our bigotry in championing our explanations. The chiefest horrors and hates in history have masqueraded under the name of Love. If the Bible is such a Janus faced thing, so full of things incomprehensible which one must profess to comprehend is it not a dreadful thing to think about God, who made us and remembers that we are dust, should have given it to us as the only guide to salvation? I, as an unworthy layman, am sick to the soul of the theories of Atonement, the theories of the Trinity, and all the other theories which undertake to go beyond the Teacher himself and introduce subtleties for simplicity. All welcome, then, and honor to the fearless man, be he called iconoclast, heretic, or miscreant, who breaks through the obscuring traditions to the Christ himself.



## Preachers

It is a pity that church people sometimes mistake dullness for piety, and, because the boy eats clay and has not enough blood behind his sallow face to make him "mischievous," persuade him that he is called to preach and send him off to college. The tendency of his influence is to bring the cause into scorn. We are a far cry from mediaeval times, when the superstitious sanctity of the priesthood obscured its stupidity. A modern man is very restive in the congregation when he feels that he himself can outpreach the preacher.

## The Best Place to Eat

A year or two ago a man of the name of Fletcher—wasn't Fletcher his name?—won transient fame by his style of eating. The papers and magazines were full of him and his picture. He had been turned out to die, and, when thus face to face with the last enemy, he thought out the situation and decided that life or death depended upon diet. So he became his own physician, ate when he was hungry, what his appetite cried out for, and wherever his pains struck him. The story went that he grew to be the most savvygrous man in his city. There is no telling how many deluded men and women followed Fletcher's lead and soon died. That is not the way to eat.

A man is talking to you now who has tried all sorts of eating and speaks out of an inexhaustible experience; who saith with the Preacher, "vanity of vanities"; who idealizes good food along with other yearnings for the beautiful. Here is your bachelor's penalty, or rather one of his many penalties: the man who has been happy enough to marry a wife and have a household of his own does not want other people fooling about there, and he turns the bachelor from his door; the bachelor seeks a boarding house and likes it tremendously for a week or a month, but it's the same thing day by day; he gets him a rate at the hotel and eats famously for a fortnight, but nothing on the bill of fare is changed but the date, and he comes to loathe the thought of it; finally, he "girds up his loins," as Artemus Ward would say, and goes in for the restaurants. This is the era of demoralization.

The man who lives at cafés and restaurants cares not at what hour he gets out of bed, for there is no impatient jingle of breakfast bell to summon him. He loses the benefit of the divisions of the day, by which we all measure our work. There is no more any regularity to his physical and mental habits, and he loses the joy of the highest of social functions, the sitting at meat with his friends. He feels hoboish, and yet he comes across with sixty-five cents for his bird on toast and forty cents for his oyster stew. In the morning

he saith, "Would God it were night," and at nightfall, "Would God it were dawn." Poor, miserable, starved fellow! Such a life may have made the late Fletcher fat and sassy for a month, long enough to give him fame, but here's two to one that he died the second month.

Good women will think this is humor or an isolated case or the murmurings of a mood; but it isn't. Every city is full of such vagabonds. They are not fastidious or pickayunish. They are not invalids. It is not with them a failure of appetite. A dinner of delicious ham and an egg on top of each slice, sure enough coffee and sure enough cream, will create all the appetite he needs. It does not make so much difference what the fare is, provided it isn't forever and a day the same, same, same thing. The way "folks" eat is the way to eat. If it is Chicago canned stuff today, it will be something else tomorrow, and there will be some joke or jest to go along with it.

Yet the late Mr. Fletcher flourished the other way. Dogmatism counts almost as little when you come to eat as when it directs itself to the sale of a book. You simply don't know and can't tell. Ed Reid says there is a story in one of this week's periodicals to the effect that two strapping men met and one said to the other, "What is your manner of life, that I see you in such condition?"

"Simple enough," the man replied. "I take a cold bath at 8 every morning in running water; I eat an egg on toast for breakfast and walk five miles; I eat a chop for luncheon and walk five miles; at dinner at six o'clock I eat a pretty heavy meal, and go to bed at ten, whether or no. That is how I keep in good shape. But how do you?"

"Well," said the other man, "I get up when I please. I eat what, when, and where I please. I generally ride to my office. I smoke 10 or 15 cigars a day, and at night I drink as long as any of the boys will sit up with me. That's my regime."

There is this to consider: No man is content with his lot. You remember Poet Robinson's "Richard Cory," the envy of all the town, whom fortune seemed to favor with all her smiles, and yet

"Richard Cory, one calm summer night,

Went home and put a bullet through his head."

The ploughman must complain, and so must Plato. If one sat at Rockybilt's table and drank his champagne and ate the devisements of his Chinese chef, one would still have some grievance. The married man admits in his heart that he has given hostages to fortune, and the bachelor groans, "Would that life were any other than it is!"

Whether it be a failure of food, of companionship, of mental or physical stimulus or what not, there is always some failure, and the man who seems the envy of all his compeers may be the most wretched and unhappy of them all. There is this, however, which cannot be disputed: that wholesome, palatable food is the condition of useful life; that the only place to get it to suit you is at home.

## Little Girls at Play

A sad sight was that lawn over on North College street yesterday afternoon, where little Miss Evelyn Blake and her cousin, littler Miss Ruth Hightower, had deserted their playthings and left them topsy-turvy on the grass. It looked as if dawn had surprised fairies at their revelry and they had run away to their hiding places, without waiting to gather up their furniture.

The tiny dinner-table, flanked by two wee-bit chairs, was about the only thing left on its legs. The two-story tin house had fallen down; one poor, fuzzy-headed doll was smothering, flat on her face, and the other, a sassy, black-eyed mistress, was lying with one arm held out in dumb appeal; the little pillows betrayed negligent housekeeping, for they had no cases to conceal the blue-striped tick; the bedclothes, they being towels, were lazily jumbled; the old clock face, the small pink parasol, the pasteboard shoe-box, and even the parlor carpet—a hearth rug—had been tossed just any old where. All this was under a roof of maple leaves. There was not a living thing in sight, save a black and tan rat terrier, curled up on the doll bed. If Miss Ruth and Miss Evelyn hadn't come up while I still looked at their abandoned property, I should have thought that the household had suddenly been possessed of the desire to go away for the summer and had left the premises in the confusion incident to packing and sewing. Indeed, a great deal of sewing had been done there, as the dainty doll aprons and skirts testified, and a deal more had been projected, as shown by the haphazard scraps, still unfashioned. My conclusion, as I say, should have been wrong; for the young ladies did come up. They had only been at the next-door neighbor's and had seen a stranger staring at and trespassing upon their heath, and it was with a brave show of proprietorship that they demanded what he was doing there. Miss Ruth's white dress was touched with no color, but Miss Evelyn had a broad pink ribbon, tied with a generous bow, for her belt. Both their cropped heads were bare, and they were as cool as their shady playground. Though they spoke rather abruptly to their uninvited

visitor, I am glad they came home just then, because (1) I should dislike to think that they were hard-hearted enough to go away to the springs and leave those poor, helpless dolls in such uncomfortable positions and without food, drink, or change of raiment, and (2) the busy way in which they began to set things to rights disabused my mind of its first impression, that here was the abode of careless, lazy housewives. They do not know me nor care for my opinion, but I am glad to have been set right for my own sake. The exposure of bad housewifery is just as painful to me as the exposure of bad packinghouses—I mean the existence, rather than exposure. It is just as bad as any other sort of ugliness where beauty might be.

There is nothing so self-sufficient as a child; no other such artist. What Miss Ruth would have she wills it in her imagination, and, lo, there you are! She is the mistress of an ingleside at five years old. The life she imagines in that sassy-eyed doll is as well for her purpose as life indeed. Her mind is more creative than Shakespeare's. Little it differs with her whether she be in the city or the country, as it will in her womanhood. When she grows older and learns to distinguish dream from reality, she will lose year by year the blessed capacity to enjoy herself, in the strict sense of the term. She will feel the need of stimulation from other minds and must have human society to avoid the estate of a gaping dullard. But now she can have her palace under the maple, hard by a city street, or she can wander alone about pastures and woods and "find society where none intrudes." The grown man who might go with her would, if he should be an ordinary man, see nothing in the leafy dingle but briars and brush, but her caprice would people it with life. Perfect knowledge drives out all fear, and all fancy. If one could know all things, as soon as his mind grew accustomed to the knowledge, he would lose the chiefest joy of life—the ability to wonder and the thrill of discovery. There would be no more poetry for him; he would be helpless in the prison of his wisdom. The dream-wings would be clipped. He could nevermore enjoy himself. Laughter would die from his lips, love from his heart, and terror from his eyes. Fact would rear up before every fantasy and give it the lie. This line of philosophy, however, is imaginary almost beyond

the pale of poetic license; for is it not a wild supposition, that of a man possessed of all knowledge? No man born of woman stands in danger on that score. The point is that this faculty of enjoying one's self is in some sort a recompense for ignorance and child-heartedness. The child's great desire is to get grown. The boy of five wants to shave and wear long trousers, and the girl of five surrounds herself with her doll children and plays mother. They do not know, as none of us know, happiness when they have it; else they would be content to be children forever.

The saddest condition of human life is what old Wordsworth saw and expressed in his famous Ode, that we come into the world fresh from heaven and "trailing clouds of glory," but march through life with our faces from it. He, most of all men, perhaps, held to his heaven and did not permit himself to drift away from it. He never lost his sense of a Presence in nature, nor his "simple faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes." He needed no Coney Island, no theatre, no automobile, no artificial amusement; the black curtain of apathy never fell before his eyes; with the strength of a strong man, he lived a long life of childhood.

Some day Miss Ruth and Miss Evelyn will jumble their toys and leave them for good, waking to the knowledge that they are but make-believe. It is up to them how much they will remember and cleave to of these budding spring days, against the stout, well-fed summer and the hectic autumn. But it is foolish now to suggest less cheerful things to them, and very useless. May April linger long with them, when they may have what they will to have and can lavish love on a piece of china with glass eyes and hempen hair!

## "Yarbs"

Dr. Ezckiel Obadiah Sikes, who, when asked if he were allopathic or homeopathic, replied, simply, "Yarbs," had no maxim of medicine except, "Give natur' what natur' calls fer." If nature's craving happened to be out of season, then apply the "cy pres" doctrine, and supply it as nearly as possible. He usually healed his patients under this doctrine; but he lost the case of Sal Toomer by feeding gourds to her when she craved melons out of season. But Sal might have died anyhow.

If Dr. E.O. Sikes' theory is a principle, then should all the world sleep through April. Young things sleep in order to gain healthful growth.

Maybe a man's mind is rejuvenated every spring, and in its sappy condition would be injured by any strain, like the fat weed that grows in shade. School children will back me here. They feel this way when the air in the room is full of yawns and chalk dust and shimmery lights. The farmer's poor boy, rising with the cockcrow and rubbing his eyes and feeling as if he had been jerked out of a bottomless depth of oblivion and bliss, will hope for the extension of the maxim. The lily-throated girl, who sleeps whole afternoons anyhow, will not care for learning, so long as she enjoys its practice in advance. All the male population, if they gave nature what nature calls for, would join in a mighty chorus, to the tune of Hiawatha, "Let the women do the work," to which the women in complaint would reply, like the Jewish maidens to one another, "Everybody works but father." But when you follow Dr. Zeke into the doctrine of "cy pres," and, when nature calls for sleep and sleep, for many interests, is out of season, apply the nearest remedy to it—which is death—then, like Sal Toomer, when gourds were fed her in place of melons, we begin to kick and scuffle.

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."



No sir. It will not do to follow Dr. E.O.S. too far. Nature carries poisons as well as foods. As he is happier who prevents disease than he who finds himself compelled to fight it, so is he happier who tasks himself than he who waits for the "armed man" to task him. Girl at the window, get back to your piano; schoolboy, start again on "Arma virum que cano"; farmer lad, shake off your sleep; and I will slip upstairs, converted to my own preaching, take that Easter hymn by the horns and have it locked in its iron keep by seven of the clock. Oh, ho, ho! Get behind me, Dr. Zeke, thou luring liar, and tempt us not along the slop of our own inclination!

## From Norfolk to New York by Boat

*Norfolk, Va., On the Boat, May 12.*—It was good enough sleeping last night between Charlotte and here to have induced even Mr. Dooly to translate into his own dialect, "Home ain't nothin' lak dis." The only trouble with such a train trip is due to the smoking-room hog, about getting-up time. If he would writhe into his trousers before he leaves his berth, go to the smoking room and wash his face and brush his hair, and do the rest of his dressing at his berth, he would not be a hog. But he lugs his suitcase in there, and gives it a seat; he takes a leisurely shave; and when he is dressed and tidied up, he gets out his cigarettes and settles himself in another seat to watch the landscape. Two of them held the fort this morning, and everybody else had to bend double to get into his clothes at all. Can you imagine how the women dress, whose modesty will not permit them to hang a foot out? Surely they must sleep in their day clothes—think some more what to do with his guests after they have performed the athletic feat of dressing and before the berths are made into seats.

I came upon the boat here, "The Jefferson," as soon as its guardians allowed, that is, at noon; for I had knocked about in the city only a short while before discovering that they are selling soft drinks for a dime. But an idle man in a strange place must have great quantities of soft drinks—or hard ones, as the case may be—and a dime is a sweet little thing.

So I went to my room and read myself to sleep on Newbolt's lyrics. I know not, as the novelists say, how long I had slept, when there was a noise as of some one gently rapping, tapping at my chamber door. It was a porter and my roommate. The latter is a good looking fellow and I confided my name to him.

"I am Folk, from Missouri," he said.

I merely cast up my eyes, for I did not know whether he was the antigraft governor or the man who must be shown.

"The Governor's my uncle," he explained.

"Your uncle, H.B. Folk, was a classmate of mine," I told him.

He blushed—I cannot think why, for there is no finer fellow than F.B. Folk—but he blushed, and replied, “Then—er...it will be all right.”

“Yes,” I agreed, pointing to the notice on the door. “I won’t deposit my money and jewelry with the steward.”

Now, I wanted to make a big thing of this little sea voyage, but I will have to get the salt vocabulary. As I sit here on deck, looking over the harbor, I do not even know whether I am on the bow or prow of the boat. Anyhow, my back is propped against the pilot’s box, and when I see his wheels through the glass I think of Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*. The wind flutters the sheet so that I can hardly write, and the printer, I fear, can hardly read. It is a great experience for a lifelong landsman to watch the craft, ferries, tugs, launches, big steamers, and sluggish freight boats, so numerous it is a wonder they do not run athwart one another. By the time we get to New York harbor I will have learned words enough to convey a lubber’s impression of it. Meantime, I wonder where that sullen old dragon anchored out yonder came from and why it, or rather, she stays out there and sulks.

This letter is intended as a sort of preface to a traveler’s notebook—the succeeding ones to comprise the notebook. If here or hereafter readers call me green, I confess it, but file the counterclaim that a green man is happier than a world-weary one. I am going to have oceans of fun, where the sated critic would be weary. Between here and New York, for instance, if I do not get seasick, it is my purpose to write me a sonnet to my mistress’ eyebrows and take it around to every editor in New York. If they “cut me under and turn me down,” who is there to tell on me? But I will tell on them; for it will make good reading to know how people with manuscripts for sale get to them and how they treat their contributors.

And that magazine exploit is a mere item in the catalogue prospective. Who knows me in New York, or cares if I be alive or dead? Then I shall not be proud before the boot-black, but ask him what that is over yonder and will stand and stare at it as long as I blame please. If a man looks at me and thinks me a fool, I shall be entirely careless of his opinion. Wedded to such a purpose, your

sandhillian will creep tomorrow afternoon into New York—a greater solitude than valleys of wiregrass and hills of blackjack.

But these lines have been written lazily, with long interruptions, and it will not be long before the boat starts. Give me credit for standing on the deck, as she throbs to seaward, Byronically blowing a kiss to mother earth, out of whose solemn sight I have never been.

## In New York

One may walk about New York, inquiring one's way, and not be shocked with the size of the place; the coppers and mail-carriers and idle lackeys will direct him by blocks and numbers. But the other day I was shocked with it. The boat on which I had passage was to leave at 3, and there was not a great deal of time to spare. Thinks I, I will go to the Osborne law office and see how metropolitan lawyers fix themselves. Not far from 'The Times building, I asked a copper, "Where is James W. Osborne's law office—the fellow you voted for for district attorney?" He pointed, "It's three and a half miles down that way," he said. He quieted the shock, however, when he added "nine minutes by subway." Another way to get a just impression of the city distances is to take the front car on the elevated; the long, straightaway stretches of railroad track might lead you to think you were down here at the Carolina Central, if the latter were double-tracked.

The New Yorkers themselves do not seem to have much idea of provincial distances. I was talking to the associate editor of McClure's Magazine, Mr. Bynner, when Mr. McClure, whose office adjoined, came in to get a paper. "North Carolina," he said, apropos of my presence. "That's where O. Henry came from, isn't it?" "If so," said I, "he kept powerful quiet before he came." Mr. Bynner laughed, "No; O. Henry came from Texas." "Oh, well," said Mr. McClure "that's about the same thing."

Another thing about the bigness of New York: when you come home everybody wants to know if you went to some particular place. "To the Hippodrome?" "No." "To Little Hungary?" "No." "To Coney?" "No." "To see the Music Master?" "No." "On the Wonders-of-New York tallyho trip?" "Well, where the thunder did you go? Were you asleep?"

It will bore you as badly as the unmannerly cataloguing of popular novels you haven't read. As for me, I don't regret missing the Hippodrome or any of those other things. I sauntered and took my time, and talked to all classes of people, and was more

and more surprised that Lanier should have written back to his wife that he had walked those streets all day and hadn't seen an eye that was conscious it had a heart behind it. Everybody I spoke to—that is, everybody who knew English, and I saluted, a good many who didn't—replied most courteously, and not a few of them stopped to talk a while. I was on the car, en route back to my hotel the second night I was there. I was leaning on the tailgate, where they will let you smoke, and was talking to the conductor. A well-dressed young man, overhearing, asked me, "North or South Carolina?" And when I had answered, he said, "I knew it was one or the other. If you will get off with me at the next stop I'll give you dinner."

Having no family to mourn me, I told him all solid.

The dinner was in the New York Athletic Club. We swapped names, his being E.W. Forest. Over the good dinner which he ordered and the 50-cent cigars I noticed him sign for, he told me that his grandparents had come from Atlanta; that he disapproved of T. Roosevelt and gloried in Bailey and William; that, though he had never been South, he knew what a dead-game sport a Southern man is, for his grandparents had come from Savannah; and so on. He swore he could beat me a game of pool, but I showed him that I could spot him balls. In fact, I never saw a man enjoy an evening so much. He reveled in the romance of picking up a lonely stranger and lavishing kindnesses on him. He didn't want me to think, he said, that New York was inhospitable. That I, for my part, was having a good time need hardly be said. It was all I could do to keep from laughing outright at the drollery of the thing, for it was perfectly evident that Mr. Forest had no ulterior motives. The first thing he did when we entered the club was to telephone his people that he would not be home till late. He was, as Capt. Wright would say, "a plum curiosity" to me; he wouldn't let me share expenses, for the rules of the club—he told me—wouldn't let me share expenses; and when it came time to go, he was not satisfied to tell me good-bye at the car, but would hear to nothing but going with me to my hotel, say, 15 blocks away. Oh, he did the thing up so brown that I lie awake nights now, smiling at the memory of him.

He was a broker; we had no study of mutual interest to talk about; yet we talked, and the hours went by like a novelty show.

So don't ask me about the Hippodrome. I wouldn't trade Mr. Edwin Walden Forest for it and Coney in fee simple.

I stood in the little park on Union Square, staring about me. My eye fell on a big sign, "E. & W. Shirts, Collars, and Cuffs," and below it, "Century Magazine, Century Company, St. Nicholas, for Young Folks," and below that, "The Baker & Taylor Company." How familiar! I went up first to The Century office, but Mr. Johnson was in Europe and Mr. Gilder was too busy for long interruption then, but invited me to lunch with him next day.

In reply to the clerk's question in the Baker & Taylor store, I told him I was a loafer, and he seemed amused. "Here is an acre of books," I mused. "Do you know where all your books are?" He smiled. "Call for one," he challenged. "Well," said I, "I want Stephen Phillips' *Paola and Francesca*." He led the way a hundred yards, it seemed to me, and laid his hand on it. I called for Bullfinch's *Age of Fable*, and he went as far in another direction and handed it to me. In neither case did he pause a moment to scan titles, but could, I believe, have found the books in the dark. He was so pleased with himself that he suggested that he pay the express home.

Then I took note that, of the passers on the street, the proportion of women showing marks of dissipation was far greater than that of the men; an A.P. reporter lent me his card to go through the police lines and see a fire of such size that The Sun gave it a column; I spotted a good many Southern Negroes and made friends with them; I fooled about the docks, watched the ships and foreign faces, the tremendous bandy-legged, tray-footed draught horses, and a thousand other things, a story of some length in each.

Of course, nothing else was comparable to my visit to the Players Club, to which Mr. Gilder introduced me. We sat at a table with David Bispham, the grand opera singer, Robert Reid, the painter, (both of whom came of Southern ancestry), John Finley, president of the College of New York, and others of that stamp. The conversation happened to be about telepathy and other occult things, one of them hoodooism. After lunch Mr. Gilder took me up to the room where Edwin Booth lived and died. It is carefully

preserved as he left it. The windows give out on Gramercy Park, and it was easy to imagine the great actor (the Sargent portrait of whom hung on the wall) lounging in one of his leathern chairs and looking out on the sunshine and green leaves. All the walls of the club are crowded with portraits and souvenirs. As we walked back, Mr. Gilder showed me, next door to the club, the home of Tilden, "The Sage of Gramercy Park," and a few doors farther the church wherein Walt Whitman and Mr. Gilder, by reason of the crowd, stood outside, hand in hand, until the services were over. To give an account of the great editor's conversation might not be in good taste, but how rich it was needs no suggestion, when one remembers that he has known with more or less intimacy all the men of national eminence for more than a score of years.

The man who travels with a view to writing what he sees cannot make a bigger mistake than to postpone his record until he gets home. He should cover each day's incidents that day; otherwise he will have too great an accumulation of material to admit of the little human details, the sequence of events will be lost in a general recollection, and a great deal of his enthusiasm will evaporate. Besides that, the reader will find a better smack to the stuff when it is dated from the scene and is served warm.



## A Tribute to the Jews

Said Rabbi Eichler, some time ago: "We have reached a critical epoch when our internal religious affairs require readjustment. Religiously we are in a perplexed state. We have been swept from our ancient moorings and find ourselves on a wide ocean without a compass to guide us."

But now, since the Russian massacres have come to pass and the cry of their brethren in distress has crossed the seas, The American Israelite says: "For the first time the great representative Jewish organizations have sunk all rivalry for precedence and taken united action."

Israel has been in God's school a long time, and a hard school he has found it. In it he has borne millenniums of chastisement: his children have been oppressed, enslaved, exiled, cast into prison, and slain. But, looking back over his history, he has no reason to doubt that "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." He has been the world's schoolmaster. By slow degrees he arrived at the monotheistic conception, which he did not acquire completely until Isaiah; and, as the Wandering Jew, he has carried this conception throughout the world. Before Christ there were 40,000 Jews in Rome, 60,000 in Alexandria, and so on; so that when Paul and his fellows came preaching Jesus they did not have to start from the ground; the Jews, to a large extent, had laid the foundation. We have, perhaps, no fundamental idea of religion for which we are not indebted to this people. We derive our ethics from it, a great part of our literature, and our philosophy of life is shot through and through with Hebraic thought. Its early ambition was for material empire, which yielded to the higher and successful ambition for religious empire.

There was envy and intrigue in Israel when his family comprised but 12 sons. How the Egyptian slavery served to solidify him into a people is familiar learning, and how his long wandering in the wilderness was his school of government. His fierce struggle for control of Canaan, crowned with success, was a mighty

strengtheners of his faith. Then there fell a crisis of which we hardly understand the significance. It was a momentous time in the history of mankind when old Elijah sat under the juniper tree and when Baal ruled the palace of the King. It had been Semitic custom for the immigrant to adopt what religion he found prevailing, as Ruth: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." But the Jews in Canaan broke this custom; and, after a tremendous peril, at which Elijah despaired, crying to heaven, "I, only I, am left," stood true to Jehovah. In all the weary wanderings of Israel since, he has ever stood true.

Having conquered Canaan, his political ambitions mounted high. It seemed a tragedy to him that Babylon, Assyria, and Persia should brush him aside as nothing; but it taught him that his hope of universal sovereignty could not be political. No comment is needed to indicate what divine tuition his was, whereby he came to cherish the purpose that the earth should be ruled, not by the King of Israel, but by Israel's God.

Another crisis in his history, graver than the thoughtless imagine, fell in the period between the Old and New Testaments, the Maccabean period. Alexander had conquered the world and the Greek hope was to Hellenize it. Greek customs were everywhere introduced and Greek philosophy and religion taught. And they were very attractive customs, philosophy, and religion; they allured the Jewish youth. Shrines were founded, gymnasia instituted, and Hellenic games made fashionable. On the other hand, whatever was held sacred by the Jews was profaned and put, if possible, out of countenance. It seemed as if the Jews were to be proselyted—made ashamed of their faith and deserters from it. But the inauguration of Hellenism was too swift. When the Greeks prepared to slaughter swine in the holy place, the father of the Maccabees smote and killed the butcher. How he and his sons fled to the mountains and organized an outlaw band, how the faithful of Israel flocked to their standard, how they made head against their usurpers and finally beat them, is too well known to recount. But it is well worth while to reflect on what had been the effect on subsequent history if Hellenism had won out.

For the last two hundred centuries Israel has had a tough time in his school of discipline. He has learned all the laws and languages of the world, and has come in contact with all the religions. He has ruled great empires and financed armies. There has been little of great importance in the realm of thought in which he has not had a share. How he has suffered and survived is a tragedy of triumph. In the name of Him who said such things as "Love one another," the hate of all men has been heaped up and spent on him; it was the heat which welded his scattered members together, kept his blood pure and his faith unswerving, it was a poor way to convert him.

And now, on the heels of our discussions of universal peace, in what we thought the dawn of our understanding that when Christ said love He did not mean hate, man "reels back into the beast" and these Russian massacres appall the world. "The terrible crimes being committed there," says Andrew Carnegie (enclosing \$10,000 for the sufferers), "are such as might lead one to lose faith in humanity." There is from all quarters a cry of horror, in which all religions unite. One thinks of the Russian Jews as echoing, after these centuries, the despairful question of their sweet singer, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" These butcheries seem an unmixed evil, until you take the statement of Rabbi Eichler and that of the American Israelite and consider them together. Look back to the beginning of this disquisition, where those statements are set out; consider them, and know if these horrors disturb your belief that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs."

Man is yet in the making. If he isn't, the Creator has signally failed in His task; an absurdity. Andrew Carnegie needn't lose faith in humanity; it is young yet, and must be given a chance. Ages will pass before it can obey God's command, "Be thou perfect"; and before the Golden Rule will become widely operative.

## A Lowlander Walking to a Mountain

One of Professor Carlyle's favorite stories is of a young man who had never lost the innocence of his eye. He and his brother, Jim and Sam, were on a trip West. Before breakfast one day they were on a hotel veranda in Colorado. "I believe I'll walk over to that little hill out yonder," said Jim, "just as an appetizer." After Jim had been gone two hours, the innkeeper came out. "Where is your brother?" he inquired of Sam. Sam told him. "Why, man," cried the innkeeper, "that mountain is 150 miles!" They got horses and set out to chase Jim down, for Sam said he was bullheaded and would go to that "hill" or perish en route. They overtook him about eight miles out. He was at a little brook that bickered along, a foot and a half wide and less than ankle deep. A prude could have stepped it. He had taken all his clothes off and bundled them on his head. "What are you going to do, Jim?" his brother asked, amazed. "I presume everything out here is made in proportion," Jim replied, "and I am fixing to swim this river."

## Fables

Old Peterlote and Chanticleer sat side by side on a cedar limb. She cuddled up close to him, and when he lustily told the watches of the night, she chuckled in her throat her endorsement of his bravado. But way before day they were both waked up wide by the squalling of a neighbor hen, upon whom the horned owl had anchored. They listened to her piteous cackling and yawping until it died in the distant swamp; then they scrunched up close together and resumed sleeping.

Moral: We glance at the headlines of yellow fever and lynchings and conflagrations and deaths and railway wrecks first thing in the morning; then we kiss our wives, chuck them under their chins, and get up and dress for breakfast.

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"What a fool is that horse," says the philosopher, seeing a team driven from the livery stable. "He has no idea where he is going, and yet he is in a fret of eagerness, champing his bits and rearing. He does not know whether green grass or the desert is ahead."

Moral: We are all pretty much like the horse.

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A certain crow delayed mating until May, when it became necessary to construct a nest in haste. The twigs and straws were but loosely woven together, and the first thunder storm that came by blew nest and eggs away. "I'm in tough luck," said the crow, explaining to the jackdaw. "I mated betimes and builded a nest with great pains; but the wind singled my pine out and blew against it that my nest fell and my eggs were burst on the ground."

That crow might be likened unto Mr. Legion, who, being incompetent to fill his job and being discharged, cusses out his

boss as a man wanting in judgment and tells his mother that he has been unjustly dealt with.

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A rooster and a fox were walking along to church, looking at the crops by the wayside. After a pause in talk, the rooster spoke up. Said he, "Your sons have done me much hurt in eating my daughters up."

"It is not true," denied the fox, flushing, "for my sons told me they did not so. You say you saw them do it, and the greater therefore is your guilt. I have no charity in my heart for you."

Thereupon the fox fell upon the truthful rooster and did his worst by him.

This tale may be likened unto that of a man who contends with his neighbor against his neighbor's children. All children, according to scripture and as a matter of fact, are natural born liars; the parent recognizes this truth of all infants save his own. But he will believe the latter against the world.

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There were once a cur and a fice on opposite sides of the fence. So fierce were they in their passion to get together that they gnawed at the paling and their several owners thought that if they did ever get past the barrier there would be but a greasy spot left of them. When, however, the small boy opened the gate, the fice and cur merely sniffed each other and passed on.

Moral: You draw it.

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As death is the chief good so is laziness the chief evil of human nature. There is, however, a chance to recover from laziness.



V

On Writing





## A Good Way to Ruin a Writer

A fine way to ruin a man in some respects is to put him to thinking what is going to happen after he is dead. For one thing, it ruins him as a letter writer. A reading of the published letters of almost all famous men will prove this: their letters are good literary material, but should be called essays. It is a pity that a thing so much sought for as fame should, when wooed and won, come into a man's home and put a guard over his heart and mask over his face. But that is what it does. After he becomes famous he will compose essays and poems to his wife, and will never again call her his mouse, except on dark nights when his house is dark and barred, and then he will whisper. We profess to go to the letters of the famous dead for personal revelations of them; but you may be sure they were on the lookout and had all their tricks of style at hand; for with the great a lust for privacy accompanies a lust for fame. Tennyson's "The Dead Prophet" is as familiar a treatment of this great-man dread.

"Dumb on the winter heath he lay,  
His friends had stript him bare,  
And roll'd his nakedness everyway  
That all the crowd might stare."

No, if you want sure enough letters you must get them from a writer who is not conscious of the world and the long continuance of time, but who had in mind only one face when he wrote.

These thoughts are suggested by our own Dr. Edwin Mims' life of Sidney Lanier—just from the press and to be reviewed in a day or so. It is an excellent book, so skilfully and carefully composed that Lanier is allowed to tell in his own words a large part of his life story. Quotations from his letters abound.

Now, Lanier was a wonderfully good man, though not Galahad. There have been few poets whose lives compared in beauty with their songs so closely as did his. But surely this spirit had

paled and died if it had never breathed any other than the rare one in which he keeps his readers. In one of his poems he makes the cornstalk an emblem of the ideal poet; it reaches up toward heaven, but it keeps its hold on the soil. Surely, when he was at home, he didn't say to his wife, "Thou knowest" and "thou rememberest," as he does in these letters. If he had not had his eye on the future, with that strange, almost universal passion for the immortal regard or men, his would have been much finer letters and sorrier essays.

His biography says that he was a man of exhilarating presence, buoyant, cheerful, optimistic. Yet through every one of his letters runs a strain of pathos, subtle complaint, from which the reader cannot avoid the impression that the man's heart—if these letters reveal it—was in rebellion against fortune. In the face of first hand evidence that he was merry-hearted, these letters are false. Did he always live, as Hall Caine writes, at the top of his voice? Did he always live so without ever relaxing from the absorbing and exhausting contemplation of art and its bearing on life? Did he ever lose the buttons from his clothes when away from home, and have to replace them with pegs? Among his many letters which have been preserved it would be delicious to find one like this:

Dear Mother: These Yankees have caught me and put me in prison, and I am having a dreadful time. I hate these Yankees. I wish the war would hurry to an end, so I could go home and get you to make me some breeches. There is not a button on these. I am bristling with pegs, which I whittled off the prison boards and inserted where the buttons were. Please write me how many chickens the old blue hen hatched and whether the cats along High Street are eating them. Well, I'm a little sleepy, and will lie down here in the mud and snooze a while. Write soon. I am as hungry as a dog.

Your boy, Sid.

Lanier had a right to regard his letters as a part of his literary bequest to posterity; so had Emerson and Carlyle, in their very self-conscious correspondence; so had Robert Browning, when he gave his letters to and from his wife into the hands of his son, all

arranged in the order of time and tied neatly, and bade him keep them and do with them as he should think best. They are just as much a part of Browning's and Mrs. Browning's works as "The Last Ride Together" and "Aurora Leigh." No man should bare his bosom to the public gaze if he doesn't feel like it. The point is that these alleged letters are not letters—they are not mere written conversations and they do not reveal the writer off his guard and as he was.

We are curious. If there is a way to clap eye to keyhole, we would clap it. When we are attracted by a writer's art or a speaker's cloquence, or a painter's genius, we are not satisfied there; like *Oliver Twist*, we want MORE. We would eavesdrop and surprise the man in his legitimate privacy. If we cannot get the truth, we go about and tell lies on him. It is all our fault. Sidney Lanier and Emerson knew us well enough, and they did not wish to write their wives as they would have liked to write any more than a lover wishes to be caught kissing his sweetheart. We have no more right to their private life than we have to dog the lover. They chose to be known as "public" men; in other capacities their lives are no affair of ours.

We don't know anything about Shakespeare; his embalmed beauty comes to us like the scent of hidden flowers, like the song of a bird in the night. Who was it long, long ago that asked, "And where, and O where does your Highland laddie dwell?" To get the reply, "He dwells in bonny Scotland, at the sign of the Bluebells!" Who was Homer? Who was Isaiah? The man that wrote Job—can the scholars name him? Time knows its duty; sooner or later it shuffles off from beauty its mortal coil, and leaves it disembodied, the heritage of all men. The folk songs we sing move us all the more because they are waifs, dateless and deathless. Some shepherd or ploughman a thousand years ago loved some sweetheart and sang a song therefore, perhaps sad, perhaps merry. Nobody knows now, nor has known for centuries, whose was first the song; but it was true to the human heart and it needs no voucher. Likely enough its author was never known outside the bailiwick. Happy man, who loved his neighbor girl, loved as he pleased, spoke in lyric

words some universal sentiment, was let alone, and had safely hid under the cool ground before the big world came to search!

Yes, Mr. Famous Man, it is your right to be let alone, and not to be gossiped about and lied on—but please, won't you sit down here on a log in the sun and whittle and volunteer to tell us something informally? Don't you like turnip soup and hard-boiled eggs? Do you eat and sleep as other people do? Maybe when you were a boy you had a bench-legged fice or a square-jawed bull puppy. Have you got any goats at home? Then do leave off talking about the soul and high ideals for half an hour and unlimber your conversation with some

“Familiar matter of today,  
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain  
That has been and may be again.”

Say legs instead of lower limbs, and we'll forgive you this once. In fact we want to get near you. We know from what you say that you must be a good fellow at heart; nobody wholly bad could think your thoughts. That is why we are so curious. Let's be good friends. You know how we all love Burns, because he was so frank with us, because he was just “rantin', rovin' Robin.” If he were alive in the flesh, we would like to saunter up to him and put our arms over his big old shoulder and say, “You dear old sinner, we'll die by you!” You needn't be cautious about us. If you have done wrong or foolish things sometimes, so have we; we have all been undignified and are all sinners. If we pretend otherwise, we are liars, you included. So when you draw your pen and paper to write home, tell your mother about your wardrobe and the place where you board, and whether the biscuits are good or not. Your mother doesn't care about ideals and sunsets; she wants to know about her boy, who used to run barefooted and cry because supper was not ready. Such a letter would make her heart happy, and if the distant public should like or dislike it, what the thunder will you care, and you partly in heaven and partly in the ground!

## Thread-Bare Expressions

It's a pity there isn't someone with a thousand voices, each voice possessing that degree of authority and prestige which gives influence, whose employment would be to dissuade newspaper correspondents from the colleges to quit the phrase, "in the history of the institution." Not that the truth isn't told, but that this country has become so bored with it as a phrase, an expression. The language is rich almost beyond estimation; there is no excuse but mental laziness or poverty for the riding to death of a group of words that were once fresh and strong. One might say that the attendance of students was larger than ever before, or exceptionally large, or unequalled in past years, or a dozen other things that would give the reader the information and at the same time refresh him.

It seems never to occur to dull speakers and writers that people sleep through their sermons or over their pages because they don't undergo the intellectual trouble to take round-ards on stale expressions and use their own words. To say gravely that virtue is its own reward does not stir a brain cell, but to state that principle in new words will penetrate the mind and task it to explore the whole meaning of the proverb.

One threadbare term may tend to quench the interest in a sermon or essay or poem. "Agitating the minds of," "Getting in touch with," "Along this line," "A distinctive feature of," "Now, first of all," "One of the most striking characteristics," "In our hearts, minds and consciences," "Nobler and higher ideals," the word "work," in connection with Y.W. and Y.M.C.A.'s, and many others—when "voyaging through strange seas of thought," a man had better try it swimming than risk any of these battered craft. These examples are as boring as the monotonous salutation of the newspaper reporter, "What do you know?" which elicits always the same reply, "Nothin'."

It is a pity for anybody to be so barren of a vocabulary, but more than a pity that the colleges should be barren also.

## How Not to Read Poetry

There is a fellow (nameless here forevermore) whom we will call Richard Roe. Though he makes his living out of science, he professes devotion to the arts of music and poetry. He carries about with him great thick folios of German music, and yet he cannot sing or perform upon the shawn, cymbal, zither, mandolin, harp, fiddle, piano, or any stringed or wind instrument. He just likes to have the music along. If you should be asked to play for him and do not wish to offend him, steer clear of Floradora and The Tenderfoot, and even of mere Americans, such as DeKoven.

But it is as an enthusiast about poetry that he is most interesting. He has studied the poets with a microscope. He will pay beyond his means for a first edition, not willing to give the author the benefit of his mature judgment and his revisals, but eager to trace him to his sources and strip him bare. He has a book called, "The Sonnets of A Century," which he could not get in this country, but imported. The book contains all the considerable sonnets of the Victorian era, and it has wide margins. These he has set down in ink Roman and Arabic numerals, asterisks, paragraph marks, and other signs and wonders, indicating to his mind the number of beats to the line, whether they are regular, and, if irregular, how so; where the cesura comes; the direct and alternating and double-twisted, back-acting alliterations; the feminine and masculine and forced rhymes; the runover lines, and so on. That little book would put Ignatius Donnelly to shame—Ignatius, who hunted a cipher in the plays of Shakespeare in order to prove that Bacon wrote them.

You may remember the description in this column some months ago of a man who was studying poetry in a correspondence school. This Richard Roe is he.

The correspondence school robbed him like a highwayman. He used to like poetry; had a natural taste for it, as one naturally likes the odor of roses. He even wrote some very creditable verses. Alas! now he can never write any more. He knows too much. Into

the dim grotto of the Muses he has entered by force, has measured them with the line and their abode with the compass, and there is about them nevermore the mystery which is their charm.

To illustrate: The other day Richard ran up with another professed devotee of poetry, whom we will call John Doe. John had not seen Richard in a year or two and had not known what a change the correspondence school had made in him. They went where they could find such books as they wanted, and John was aglow with the expectation of a season of revival. They took down a volume of Swinburne, and John assumed the right of selecting the verses to be read and praised and exclaimed over. He turned to "The Ballad of Burdens." Each of the nine stanzas, you know, is prefaced by the name of the burden to be sung about: "The burden of fair women;" "The burden of bought kisses," "The burden of sweet speeches," "The burden of long living," "The burden of bright colors," "The burden of sad sayings," "The burden of fair seasons," "The burden of dead faces," "The burden of much gladness." Richard couldn't understand the operation of Swinburne's mind, in naming these burdens thusly. There didn't seem to him to be any logical progress in the poem.

Well, when you go to pulling logic on Swinburne, demanding prose examinations of him, and analyzing him, you had as well sigh and pass on. Analysis is the proper method of mathematics and biology, but it is as fatal to beauty as the dissection of a butterfly or a bluebell.

So John turned to that matchless rondel, and read the first line:

"Kissing her hair I sat against her feet"—

"Hold on," said Richard, counting on his fingers. "That's pentameter. You would call it an iambic line, but it starts with a trochaic foot. And the vowel arrangement"—

"Oh, drat the vowels and the feet!" said John, and read the next line:

"Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet"—



"There now!" Richard broke in, "That line starts with a trochee, too." He reached over with his pencil and began marking the accents and barring off the feet with perpendicular lines. John shook him loose, and read the next verse:

"Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes.

and stampeded into the next one, before his ready companion could interrupt:

"Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies."

But Richard was prepared this time, and put his hand over the page. He had to figure as he went. No picture was builded in his imagination; there was no soft firelight in a curtained, cushioned room; there was no passionate music in the words and cadences for him; and, though he flattered himself that he loved poetry, he loved it no better than a chemist loves sulphuric acid.

They agreed to vary their pleasure by slipping over to the restaurant and getting some buttermilk and rolls. Their tastes met here. While they were eating, something bore heavily on Richard's mind.

"Do you know," he confessed, presently, "that there is something I should have learned long ago, but which I have yet to learn?"

"Is it possible?" John wondered.

"I don't know how to parse!" Richard humbly admitted.

(This is not fiction: it is the honor-bright truth).

"If I did know how," John continued, "I should purge my mind of it. I don't want to know how to parse, nor anything about cesuras, dactyls, anapests, tetrameters, and hidden alliterations. Great goodness, man! When you see a beautiful, graceful girl move along the street, do you begin to think of anatomy, the articulation of bones, the contraction of muscles?"

"I think of lines and curves," said the devotee of art.

There is at least one heart for which Browning was not spokesman when he said.

"And you, great sculptor—so you gave  
A score of years to Art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus, whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!"

## Nothing Immodest in Newspaper Mention

It is a constant source of amusement to newspaper boys, the feigned indifference of many people to mention by the press. Your young swell comes in, nods around, passes the time o' day. The boys know what is up, but they light their pipes and talk about football. Presently the fellow rises.

"Well, I just dropped in to see you fellows. I'm on my way to act as Hon. Hiram Hardy's best man at Swellville—but for goodness' sake don't mention it in the paper. I despise that sort of thing."

Of course he lets himself be persuaded.

So come in the superannuated politician and sundry others, who don't care two cents personally for all the newspaper boys on earth, saying, "I just like you fellows, and thought I'd drop in—but don't put me in the paper if you please."

Why don't they be honest and say, "Look here, boys, I'm on my way to Mr. Much Money's wedding. I'm to be best man, and I want my sweetheart and my enemies to see it in the paper. I wish you would put it in." Or, "I've got an interview which I came here to give you."

The public doesn't know the difference. The item never states that "Mr. Blush, after much persuasion, allows us to say—." And if it did say so, there would be nothing to Mr. Blush's credit, for there is nothing immodest in newspaper mention.

## Reading in Bed

It will soon be just right to read in bed with the windows up. So long as you must keep your windows down or be bothered by the cover, reading in bed does not attain its climax of luxury. You want your lamp on a table to your left, or a long-cabled electric light; you want to hear the soft sound of the wind in the curtain, after the cars have gone into the barn and when only a cabby now and then patrols the street at a walk; you want your magazines or books on the bed, where your right hand can reach them, and a table convenient for your left hand to toss them to; you want two pillows to curve your spinal cord: then for a sigh of relaxation, for the bits of verse at the bottoms of the pages and now and then a short story full of quotation marks and kissable girls!

The doctors say that reading in bed is tough on the eyes, but they say the same thing of the dots in fashionable veils. People do not pay much attention to doctors until a pain gets into their misery. If they did, they would have to eat and drink with a microscope and would have to breathe out of a hermetically-sealed contraption to avoid a Lilliputian conquest by germs, microbes, rotatoriae, animalculae, and consumption bugs, to say nothing of bacteria. Even of these last named enemies of man, what great scientist was it, who, but the other day, discovered 7,000 colonies on the point of a pin, and they—though the scientist overlooked the fact—offering inducements to immigrants. As a merciful providence has made it impossible for us to brood, when sane, on death, eternity, and other such things as made us sad and “tease us out of thought,” so we, of our own wills, refuse to be chased up a tree by the doctors, and drink from the running brook when thirsty, eat hash when hungry, wear the veil authorized by Paris and read in bed when we blame please.

In bed isn't the place to read Browning or Bacon, for they are not to be read lolling. You will not take the intellectual trouble to follow them. Hamlet, since you have read it a dozen times and studied it word by word at school, could not re-excite your mind

in this mood. Anything with a glossary and notes disgusts you. You want your brains led along, not compelled to push or even stand and wait. And every muscle, which has been on guard all day, you want to let go all hold, to give over and rest, that your "limbs," except the "limb" that holds the page to the light, may just hang on to your trunk as they will. This done, you can read deliciously, stealing a little march on the great sleeping world. Not as at the theatre—where you don't want to guffaw too big, lest the apathetic mistake you for an ass; nor cry, lest, on the sudden fall of the curtain and turning on of the lights, you be caught by the gloved people in the guilt of tears—you are here alone with God and your author, both of whom delight in a heart that laughs and cries. At funny things or things that meet your mood as funny, laugh till you shake the mosquito veil, and there be no one to suspect your sanity; or, when the dear, kissable girl goes heartbroken, let the piteous tears flow down your cheeks, and there be no one to laugh at and tell on you next day.

For a man who goes all day with the burden of business cares upon him; for the employed, whose work is really toil, in that his only interest may be his wages; for the tired woman, by any of a thousand reasons, restrained; by the student of heavy books, professional men, this is a recreation which clears the brow, sweetens the heart, and leaves the reader asleep like a child, finger between pages. It is called light reading, since it addresses, not the mind, but the elemental emotions:

"Some natural sorrow, joy, or pain,  
That has been and may be again."

A Tennyson-lover is always haunted by and quoting Tennyson's lines. They are so simple, their words so carefully weighed and "inevitable," that one cannot forget them. While writing this rambling little essay, there has been running ceaselessly through my mind, as somehow connected with the discussion, the stanza:

"Home they brought her warrior dead.  
She nor wept nor uttered cry.

All her maidens, whispering, said  
‘She must weep or she will die.’”

It is but the beautiful expression of a fireside philosophy, that grief must find vent. But, grief aside, isn't a man as good as dead when he forgets how to play, can't laugh with children, "hears no music," does not step livelier in the spring or pause a moment for a bird song, never knows the clean health of tears, but "feeds and keeps silence," scans the headlines of his paper and reads the markets, sleeps and wakes and goes through the day, a Thing. I had rather be the dying John Falstaff, who "babbled of green fields," or the one-horse farmer in his sweaty shirt, king of his little realm, a personality who goes by signs and wonders daily discerned, who comes in or goes out according to his season, who sows and tills and gathers his harvest. This farmer or John Falstaff rather than he of whom Timrod says,

"And they thought him alive while he walked  
The streets that he walked in youth.  
Ah! little they guessed the seeming man  
Was a soulless corpse in sooth!"

But far rather than any of them the fellow who makes enough not to jew whomever he buys from, mixes among the coppers and the queens about the Square, turns in tired, and reads himself to sleep—about little things he does not care to remember, putting the thought of doctors far from him, and dreaming only of the kissable girl, who had turned down a good, square-set fellow over the protest of her people, mind you—and wed a little, gimlet paleface, who was soon colonized by germs and buried beneath the weeping willow. How sad that the square-set, sunburnt fellow had "done" left and cut it all out!

For *L'envoi* I wish I knew my heart or could find the rhymed sentiments of happy Eugene Field, which are apropos; but an often-delayed search through his books have not discovered the verses. Enough to say, he read in bed. Was it in spite or because of this habit that he rejoiced and afforded the world so much joy?

## The Seeing Eye

(About What Two Hoboes Failed to See in the Southwest)

It has often been said that the seer is of more service to the world than the philosopher. The latter's work is conditioned upon the former's. Yet there are many philosophers, while the seers are few. The Saviour described most of us when He talked about men who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not. Bayard Taylor's "Views Afoot" has survived thousands of more pretentious books of travel, because Taylor looked about him, trusted his own eyes, and told simply what he saw, and the other travelers did not trust their eyes, but made inquiries among the people and reflected what was told them. This, or they saw in every object what they had read about it before they left home. A book of the class of "Views Afoot" is always fresh and fine, even though some of its author's observations be incorrect.

Two Charlotte boys came home Sunday night from a hobo jaunt through the great Southwest. They left Florence November 1, with about \$50 each. Yesterday it was noised about the newspaper shop that these boys had come back and that there would be a fine stunt in them. A reporter got down his hat and went on the search for them, and, after an hour or two, found one.

"Well, sir," said the reporter, "I want you to tell me all about your hoboing in Texas and New Mexico."

"We left Florence November 1," said the boy.

"How much money did you have?"

"About \$50 apiece."

"Tell me something of your trip, what you saw, what experience you had, how you got along—anything," the reporter requested, notebook in hand.

"Our money lasted to Sierra Blanca," said the boy. "We hoboed in a box car from there to Del Rio. From there we hoboed to San Antonio. The next place we went to was Rosenberg. Then we made it over to Galveston, and got from there to Houston. We rode the rods under a Pullman from Houston to New Orleans, a whole day.

The best we could do from New Orleans to Montgomery was a lumber gondola, and we almost froze to death. We crawled into a sugar car from Montgomery to Atlanta. We knew a man there, and he wouldn't let us hobo on home. He gave us tickets here."

"That's just a list of names," the reporter complained.

"What do you want to know then?" asked the boy.

"What you saw; what happened to you. Did you run across any girls and have any romantic experiences?"

"We saw some girls on the trains, going down there; just saw them, you know."

"After your money gave out, how did you get along? How did you get supp'n' t' eat?"

"I chopped enough wood to burn Charlotte," said the boy, brightening at the strenuous recollection. "We rolled cracker dust and helped them to fix dinner at eating houses."

That sounded good. The reporter pressed along the trail and tried to get some incidents from the chopping in country woodyards, the kind of people and what they talked about. But no; there had nothing happened but just wood-chopping. They had done just as anybody does, you know, who chops wood.

"Did you foot it any, or ride the rods and box cars altogether?"

"Footed it from Tabor to Marathon—about 25 miles. We were riding the rods and got so thirsty that we slipped out at a water tank and they saw us and wouldn't let us get back. So we had to foot it."

"What is the character of the country you walked across? Surely you couldn't help seeing it."

"No," he laughed. "We certainly saw it. It is a flat, sandy country. Sandy, sandy, sandy."

That sounded good. "White sand? Wasn't there any swards at all—just a sort of desert?"

The reporter drummed with his fingers and cast up his eyes. It seemed a bad business. He had hunted this stunt too long, however, to give it up lightly. "You must have seen something and had something to happen to you!" he resumed. "The great Southwest; the most interesting section of the country. Only a little while back a big magazine sent an accomplished writer down



there at heavy expense to tell what he saw, and one of the foremost artists to draw pictures. Did you see any of that irrigated territory?"

"Yes sirree," said the boy boastfully. "That we did. Saw plenty of it."

"What was it like?"

"Just like the places that were not irrigated, except stuff was growing on it. We saw corn growing on it. Lots of corn. It is just ditches, you know."

So it went on, the reporter calling upon all his own slight knowledge of the region from which to ask questions. But there was nothing to it. The boys had been there and had "seen" everything, and there was an end. "I wish I knew what you want to know," the boy kept saying; or "I wish I knew how to tell you."

"I've never been there. How you tell me makes no difference. Tell me in your own sweet way. Geewillikin! you were down there a month and a half, right next to the ground, hoboing it, and now you can't think of anything!"

"I wish I could tell you something," said the boy.

Wasn't that a great interview! When that boy gets married and becomes a householder he can tell his children that he had been "thar," but then they must go to sleep, for that's the end. This matter of having gone from Galveston to New Orleans, and from New Orleans to Montgomery, and so on, is like the curio worshiper, who takes you to his mysterious casket, gets out a little pebble—exactly like a gravel-stone from the Lumber river—and confides to you, "This is a stone from off the banks of the river Jordan!" How do I know that it is? for it is like any other pebble; and if he is telling the truth, where is the profit? I don't even know whether the Jordan is tawny or clear. I'd rather know that than finger a pebble. What do I care for a leaf plucked from the tree that shades Goethe's grave? A blackjack leaf from the sandhills is just as valuable. If all the wanderers who fool around and about the earth would only look, and not taking another man's word for it, but see what they pass and tell us about it as they see it, whether they see it right or wrong, we who must stay at home and hear our clocks go nick-nock all night would be delighted and informed, whereas we are really ignorant and bored.

## Thoughts on Going Home to Riverton for Rest

When a man writes for the public he feels as one who stands in the light and speaks to an audience in a dark house; the audience is silent, and he cannot see its faces to judge of its pleasure or displeasure. He is, therefore, diffident about wandering from precedent. If he keeps in the beaten way, he may not entertain, but he is sure that he will not offend. For instance, when a speaker or a writer draws from his own experience to illustrate his argument, he oftentimes prefaces the incident with the apology, "If you will pardon a personal reference." Talking shop and talking of one's self is in such questionable taste. It presumes that the worst sort of conceit and egotism. But it isn't always so. An exception is this present column; the writer intends to plant these weeds by sewing I's along the lines like seed in rows; but he does not arrogate to himself that the public cares any more about his doings than it would about those of John Smith under the same circumstances. Grant, then, the poetic belief that it is some John Smith who writes here in the first person, and, every time you strike an I, say under your breath, or over it, if you please, "That John Smith is an ass." Will that not be a good game?

But to the matter in hand: Tomorrow I am going home to stay a long time in order to store up a little vitality and to learn again what it is to be hungry; to substitute fatigue for languor; to wed nature for a June bride and abandon her in July. You cannot live by your wits if you have hardly energy enough to push a pencil or sit to a typewriter. I want some good old sunburnt blood in me, some sandhill air; want swamp mud up to my belt and fish slime on my back; I want to fight the stream again, swimming, and to pull a canoe miles and miles against a shady current; to make a stubborn springboard, run twenty steps for the jump, and go down amid a roar of bubbles and enveloping coolness. Does it not almost make you feel healthier to think about it? The bass and pickerel

have not been molested yet, it being too soon in the season for the farmer's boy. The drought will have brought the river well within its channel. Fish will be congested in the black pools, fringed with lily pads. There will be thrushes and pewees and tomtits and other swamp birds, possessed of that peculiar, liquid, reedy note which even the mockingbird cannot imitate; the ironwood and bay will be in lavish bloom and busy with bees; the wasp nests will look down at their reflection, and the blue-tailed scorpion will bask on his cypress-knee. Hither no book-agent knows to penetrate; here no schedules prevail; time moves without fever. Here, indeed, "A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

But the trouble I dread is that I shall be wrapt in too heavy a cloak of solitude. There will not be another idler on the countryside, Jack will have his plough in hand and Jean will have her pail. I must take my gourd and cane and saunter off with Man (the cur) without a human companion. I intend to invite all the boys to suspend labor and go with me, and, if they decline, then their blood be upon their heads; for I know what I shall do, I shall hunt me up one of those three-inch standing collars—the style of half a dozen years gone—and put it on. Whittham here has given me a necktie of gorgeous Indian silk, woven of many colors and long and wide enough for the Sultan's sash. I shall fix that thing fluffily about my neck. The other particulars of dress I shall think out later. Then, carrying a pictorial magazine, I shall fare forth, and, whenever I hear the sound of gee-haw, I shall make toward that field, find me a good persimmon shade at the end of the row, sprawl there on the sward in as pompous a manner as possible and proceed to turn the pages with extreme leisure, all within full view of Piers Ploughman! When he calls me John Smith, I shall feign offense at his familiarity and tell him not to disturb me in my meditations. Don't you figure that that will make him think a few swear-words? Then, I'll get some wild primroses and passion-flowers (alias, maypops) and dandle myself under the chin with them. Another detail of dress occurs to me here: I have, as a souvenir of some wedding, a pair of white gloves: these I shall wear. Moreover, I shall carry an umbrella and a very small supple walking cane.

How this will work on his emotion, it is I who know. I have seen that bleached, empty-noggined town cuss drive by with my rosy-checked sweetheart. There is nothing more to say.

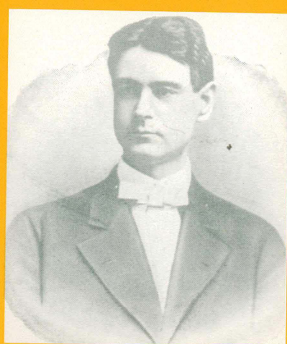
So much for subtle revenge on a fellow who will not quit his task to run with a loafer. There is one time of day when companionship will abound. From 12 till 2 the waters of the stream will surge with the savage thrusts of arms and legs. Social equality, even, will not count. Dogs, along with men, white and black, will mingle in naked revelry, so that the nymphs and neriads will run faster than they ever did from Pan. The sunburnt boys will get it back on me here, for my pomposity of the forenoon. Whereas I was once a champion swimmer, the striplings will outdistance me and look back at my panting for the shore. The sorricest of them will take the switch a notch above my best jump. In the hundred yard race for the water, I may be the last to burst it. I will too soon exhaust my breath diving for bats and plough-points on the gravel bottom. The other man will pop up ten feet ahead of me on long dives, and pooh-pooh my strangulation. But just you wait until a week be spent and these old veins get clean again and this old hide tanned! Here will be no tenderfoot at rural festivals, but the same old, long-jointed, rubber-boned John Smith, who backs down at no wrestle and takes the switch at its top notch.

Think about that buttermilk, and how good that red rooster will go! The long afternoons, "where all things always seem the same," the moonlit evenings, in which no hoofbeats or car noises drown the chirrup of a million-piece orchestra on the lawn, the calm-hearted dawns and simple sunrises—these ought to replenish the soul against any siege of artificiality. They will offer opportunity to adjust and assort confused experiences and perfect fragmentary thoughts. They will restore mental and physical health and aggression, for which God be praised! It is worth more than a fortune in gold to be a child of nature; to know what to expect of her and how to approach her. Poor Timrod, who often complained of his city-pent youth, in a sonnet to nature, says,

"When first I felt thy breath upon my brow,  
Tears of strange ecstasy gushed out like rain,

And with a longing, passionate as vain,  
I strove to clasp thee."

Nature will not stand for that. She is an honest, buxom, just-so-girl, and she wants no demonstration in hers. Timrod was a greater man than John Smith will ever be, but John can beat him at this wooing.



John Charles McNeill  
1874-1907

One of the best known literary writers in the South.

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